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# The Impact Of Independent Investigations On The Engagement Of Elementary Spanish Immersion Students Who Are Gifted

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# THE IMPACT OF INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS ON THE ENGAGEMENT OF ELEMENTARY SPANISH IMMERSION STUDENTS WHO ARE GIFTED

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For Daniel, who first inspired me to search for new ways to better serve my immersion students who are gifted. During the short time you spent on this earth you graced us with light, love, and your passion for learning. Although your contribution to this work was cut short, your presence endures.

¡Gracias mi mosquetero!

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

As my career has developed over the past eight years, I have been drawn to two specific populations of students: immersion language learners, and students who are gifted and talented. I have already explored the topic of challenging and motivating students who are gifted in small ways by developing a work menu system with extension activities that I found effective and now use with all of my students. Recently, I have reevaluated my role in teaching students who are highly gifted in my classroom. After finding out that a few parents of students in my classroom have forgone the opportunity to place their student in a program developed to meet their needs in order to keep them in the immersion program, I began looking more closely at my role in gifted education as a classroom teacher.

### Research question

The graduate classes I have taken addressing giftedness along with district professional development opportunities have led me to think more seriously about how I will continue to keep these students engaged and challenged in my classroom. District-wide professional development opportunities have led me to believe that independent investigations could improve my students' engagement and increase the challenges I am presenting to them. The information I gather could be used to not only improve my students' experiences, but also those of students who are gifted in other classrooms in the district. Due to my experiences with immersion students and students who are gifted abroad as well as in the United States, I am now asking myself: *What is the impact of*

*independent investigations on the engagement of students labeled as gifted in the elementary immersion setting?*

My interest in the Spanish language and Latino cultures led me to a career in immersion education. I studied Spanish and became licensed in elementary education at Hamline University. Although I was aware of immersion programs in the schools, my first true experience teaching in an immersion setting was when I student taught at an urban magnet immersion school in the Midwest. I became enthralled with the idea that students could concurrently learn a language as well as content material. Shortly after student teaching, I began my first full-time teaching experience at an elite British-Peruvian school in Lima, Peru. I taught native Spanish speaking students English in an immersion setting for four years. Due to limited space and high demand for a place in the school, administrators used a highly selective entrance exam to select students. This process created classrooms that were full of high performers, many of whom were gifted and talented. Because of the high concentration of students with advanced skills, entire classrooms and year groups could advance at a rate appropriate for those students, even in a second language. I became accustomed to providing differentiation for immersion students demonstrating giftedness.

When I moved back to the United States in 2013, I returned to the Midwest and continued teaching in an immersion setting, this time in Spanish, in an affluent suburban district. According to the Minnesota Department of Education's Minnesota Report card (2016), the district serves approximately 10,000 students that are overwhelmingly white (86%) and well resourced (7% on free and reduced lunch). I was informed that parents in my new school district placed a strong emphasis on academic success, sometimes to an

extreme. However, I felt prepared for this because of my experiences abroad. I was informed before beginning my first year in the district that I would be teaching a High Potential second grade "cluster" class. Rogers (2006) described cluster grouping as a group of five to eight students assigned to a teacher prepared to dedicate time to provide appropriate differentiation.

I started off the year feeling a little lost, as I was teaching a new curriculum in a different language under new guidelines. I soon noticed that some of my students were in need of a more challenging academic experience. A few were specifically asking for more work, and others were showing signs of boredom in my classroom. Due to the range of needs present in my class, I knew I would not be able to run my classroom at the pace I was used to abroad. I sought guidance from the Gifted and Talented teacher in my building who was able to direct me to some resources, which was helpful, although I still felt I could be doing more. I also began searching for resources in Spanish at the appropriate linguistic and academic level for these students.

While attending a professional development session to fulfill requirements to renew my license, I viewed a presentation from a High Potential teacher from another district. She explained how she ran her classroom using what she called work menus. These menus were essentially a list of the required work for a specific period of time, along with choices of optional extension activities for students who were looking for a challenge. The idea struck me as applicable to my situation, and I took the opportunity to repurpose and adapt the format she used in her class for use in my own classroom, but I knew I would need to translate the template as well as find resources for the extension

activities. I was nervous about starting something so new almost midyear, but it was worth trying in order to reach the aforementioned students.

I decided to make one work menu per week. My original plan was to use the work menus exclusively with the students in the High Potential cluster in my class. During the first week of implementation, I noticed other students were interested in the organizational aspect of having a list of what work would be required that week, as well as a few students who also wanted to try some of "those fun extras" as they began to call them. The next week, I decided to make the menu available for all students in my class. I explained the expectations on a Monday, and students immediately began giving positive feedback. I noticed that all students were excited to be able to choose the work they would complete during independent work time. Students who had not been identified as High Potential also began attempting the extension activities. I started to diversify the extension activities, attempting to make connections to literacy, science, art and math themes that were being taught within the framework of immersion. A "Friday Fun" element was also added, where students who had completed required work earned free time at the end of the week. I began to share my ideas with my second grade team, and the next school year two of my immersion colleagues joined me in using work menus in their classrooms.

It was at this time that I began pursuing a Gifted and Talented Certificate along with my MAEd in order to better serve the needs of my High Potential cluster class. The summer preceding the start of the 2015-2016 school year, I attended a presentation given by teachers in another building in my district. They were using an independent investigations model called "Passion Time" with their entire second grade population,

based off of the ideas from Solarz's (n.d.) Leading Children to Pursue Their Passions workshop, which is similar to Genius Hour in other districts (Juliani, 2014). According to Juliani (2014), the purpose of these programs is to allow students to investigate an interest that they have identified. In the model this particular school had developed, students are guided through the steps of a project which include planning, investigating, creating and presenting by the teacher and a set of checklists. Students are free to choose the topic, the type of research and presentation as well as the timeline of work and how long they will need to prepare their presentation. I was excited about the possibilities this model presented, especially for my students who are gifted, but struggled with how to translate it into practice, provide appropriate resources, and find time to implement it into what seemed like an already packed daily schedule.

At the same time, beginning the 2015-2016 school year, I encountered a new experience. My cluster consisted of eight High Potential students, which is considered a large number. I was also surprised to learn that two of these students had been identified as "Highly Gifted." They qualified for the district's Highly Gifted program, which serves students with an I.Q. higher than 140 in a school-within-a-school program, separate from the district's immersion program. After speaking with their parents, I learned that they had chosen not to place their children in the Highly Gifted program, even though their child's unique academic and emotional needs could be better met, because they would not have the immersion option. This made me consider my role as their teacher more carefully. Through several of my graduate classes that centered on giftedness, I realized that these students' needs could be as complex as students who qualify for Special

Education services. I began to feel a responsibility to create challenges and utilize the curriculum in a way that would meet their distinct needs.

The Passion Time presentation I had seen that summer stuck with me, and I continued to struggle with how I could implement something similar, as well as how it would benefit my students who are highly gifted. I believe that investigating the impact of independent investigations on immersion students who are gifted will allow me to gauge what my students' perceptions currently are as well as what best sparks their curiosity and willingness to learn.

**Significance of the Research Question**

The information I gather could be used to modify my instruction and ultimately increase engagement as well as improve the academic challenges I am able to offer my students who are gifted. It could also benefit my grade-level teammates. Multiple classes in each grade level in my building include High Potential clusters, meaning other teachers could use what I have learned to improve their own students' experiences. Ambitious thinking would lead me to believe that this information could be utilized to improve the immersion experience of students who are highly gifted in the district as a whole. Students whose parents decide to forgo the Highly Gifted program because of the limited opportunities for their immersion students to continue with their target language could benefit from their classroom teachers having access to ideas and strategies to engage and challenge their students who are highly gifted.

**Conclusion**

My district has developed Gifted and Highly Gifted programs to fit the needs of high achieving students. Although these programs are effective overall, there are still

gaps in differentiation options for classroom teachers to implement, particularly those in an immersion setting. Lanmark-Kaye (1996) suggested that select French immersion programs are an alternative to mainstream schools that are struggling to meet the needs of students who are gifted. However in my experience as a Spanish immersion teacher, this perception has not been the case. Although the experience can be enriching, it is not an alternative to appropriate gifted programming. Betts and Neihart (1988) described students who are gifted and are not presented with engaging and appropriate curriculum as more likely becoming disillusioned with school. With this in mind, it seems that providing immersion classroom teachers with differentiation options to engage and challenge students is in the best interest of students, teachers and the school.

My immersion classroom has been designated a High Potential cluster class, in which students in the gifted program have been purposefully clustered together according to best practices. I have already developed a set of work "menus" in which all students are presented with choices as to which tasks to perform and the time they take to complete them. Students who are able to finish the required work have a variety of extension activities to choose from that link to the topics of the week. These extensions to the curriculum have provided my students who are gifted with a more enriching and appropriate academic challenge. These students were able to develop depth in multiple subjects with the provided extension activities. I believe that with investigation, more could be done to present an increasingly challenging curriculum to the students who are gifted in my class. After viewing a presentation on how other teachers are using independent investigations within my district, also known as "Passion Time" in their classrooms to increase student motivation and engagement, I am asking the question:

*What is the impact of independent investigations on the engagement of students labeled as gifted in the elementary immersion setting?*

Chapter two outlines the four major topics that provide context for this capstone project: gifted education, immersion education, independent investigations and student engagement. In this project, the students studied participate in both gifted education and immersion programs. In chapter two, gifted education program models are defined as well as those interventions that are already in place for students in the district, such as cluster grouping. Students participating in this project receive language instruction through a total immersion model. The examination of this and other immersion program models outline the need for more resources and options such as the proposed intervention, independent investigations. Attempting to maximize student engagement in the immersion classroom can be difficult due to a lack of resources that are appropriate for students who are gifted in the target language. Chapter two addresses specific issues and strategies related to the engagement of immersion students who are gifted.

# CHAPTER TWO

# REVIEW OF LITERATURE

I became more aware of my responsibility as a classroom teacher needing to better meet the needs of students who are gifted in the immersion settings when I learned that some students have continued their education in an immersion setting instead of attending a program designed for learners who are highly gifted. Although I had created a work menu system that provided extension activities, I felt I could be doing even more to better challenge and engage my immersion students who are gifted. Other teachers' use of Passion Time in my district, a time when students investigate, create and present a project of their choosing, led me to question: *What is the impact of independent investigations on the engagement of students labeled as gifted in the elementary immersion setting?*

This study investigates the effect on student engagement of one intervention geared toward students who are in an immersion setting and are gifted. This chapter reviews the literature related to my research question. Topics covered include gifted education, immersion education, the proposed intervention of independent investigations as well as student engagement. These topics provide context and background to my research question as well as highlight the need for more investigation into the intersecting themes of gifted and immersion education.

## Gifted Education

The school involved in this project practices gifted cluster grouping. Rogers (2006) described cluster grouping as a group of five to eight students assigned to a teacher prepared to dedicate time to provide appropriate differentiation. This section will

explore the program models available for gifted education, as well as interventions that are already available for students who are gifted involved in this project, such as school-within-a-school models and cluster grouping. Some of the most widely used program models for gifted education are acceleration (both in class and between grade levels), pullout programs, and school-within-a-school programs.

**Gifted education program models.** This section defines different common gifted program models as well as explains their organization and impact. The first is acceleration, which is a fairly traditional approach to gifted education. Acceleration is the advancement of students through the curriculum as they progress to more challenging concepts. Two variations of acceleration are content acceleration and grade-level acceleration. In content acceleration, students advance to more complicated concepts in a specific subject such as math. In grade-level acceleration, students advance to another grade in order to create a more challenging academic learning environment. Students participating in this capstone have acceleration offered to them when appropriate, specifically in math. Students are able to advance to above grade-level curriculum after review of their standardized test scores and the previous year's performance. Another common model is a pull-out program. In this model, students who are formally identified as gifted through standardized and cognitive abilities tests as well as teacher and parent observations, are placed in a mainstream classroom and "pulled-out" for gifted services for a set amount of time. Students participating in this capstone attend a once-a-week pull out program with a licensed High Potential teacher. These program models were researched due to their widespread implementation and popularity as well as their influence on students participating in this study.

***Acceleration*.** Content acceleration often comes to mind when teachers think about gifted education; students advance through the curriculum to more advanced concepts at a faster rate than their peers. Mason (2013) divided a multi-faceted acceleration model into two separate categories: the first being methods that are used within or outside the classroom and the second include grade and subject-based accommodations. Within the first model are accommodations such as cluster grouping and content acceleration, or allowing students to move on with concepts in a particular content area, such as math, when they are ready. Johnsen (2005) highlighted two examples of students who would benefit from content acceleration. She suggested the teachers use pre-assessments for students who are advanced, stating they should participate in whole-class instruction for new concepts and be provided with independent work that is on a more complex level. Colangelo, Assouline and Gross (2004) framed their report *A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students* in the light of the historical acceptance of subject or content acceleration. Their report detailed experiences like that of one-room schoolhouses with teachers who knew their students well and who allowed them to progress at their own pace, a more natural form of acceleration. They also praised efforts of organizations that paved the way for students to advance at an accelerated pace, such as the Ford Foundation instituting the College Board Advanced Placement Program in the 1950s.

Although educators may be aware of the benefits of acceleration, limits of opportunity and resources can hinder efforts to accelerate students who are gifted within the classroom. Johnsen (2005) listed ways in which teachers today could be supported in their efforts to accelerate students who are gifted within the classroom. These suggestions

included allowing teachers to have access to above-grade level assessments and curriculum as well as support for teachers to utilize these materials and organize their classrooms to be conducive to independent learning. Colangelo, Assouline and Gross (2004) emphasized the practicality and effectiveness of early-admission to school and grade-skipping.

Some educators and parents have expressed doubt or even fear of the consequences of grade-level acceleration, or grade-skipping. Apprehensiveness surrounding social ramifications for students including feelings of loneliness or lack of friends are among the most expressed concerns. Although self-esteem is now being investigated as playing an important role in student success, students with an inflated self-esteem, or those who believe they are always right or cannot make a mistake, can have their own set of issues. Colangelo, Assouline and Gross (2005) addressed these concerns and brought to light other possible ramifications for students who are gifted if they are not accelerated at an appropriate pace and cited inflated self-esteem as one. They called the decrease in self-esteem some students go through while being accelerated at grade level the "Little-Fish-Big-Pond effect" (p. 23) and reassured readers that this effect does not last long and students' self-esteem usually picks back up after finding friends and acceptance in their new surroundings.

My research addresses what teachers can do for students if acceleration is not possible or appropriate for a student who is gifted in their classroom due to scheduling or other factors. This organization of instruction can be observed in other areas of schools as well. Students participating in this study attend a weekly pull-out session that focuses on both academic and affective goals. Other program models have students continue their

participation in work with their age-level peers in the mainstream classroom while receiving specialized instruction and curriculum in a pull-out model a set number of hours a week.

***Pull-out Programs.*** Pull-out programs have been used to serve the needs of many different students in schools. In a survey of 4,500 students, Swiatek and Lupkowski-Shoplik, (2003) found that the pull-out model was the most common experience. Cox, Daniel, and Boston (1985) defined pull-out programs for the gifted as an:

> ...arrangement that places gifted students in a heterogeneous classroom for most of their instruction and "pulls them out" to study with other bright youngsters in special classes in a different setting for a portion of the school week. (p. 43)

Vaughn, Feldhusen, and Asher's (1991) meta-analysis found that gifted pull-out programs have positive effects on student achievement and thinking with no evidence of negative effects on students' self-concept. It is suggested that a pull-out program for the gifted is better suited to smaller districts or those with limited resources. Some districts, including the one in question, are utilizing a multi-faceted program approach, where students are participating in multiple styles of accommodations such as pull-out programs in tandem with cluster grouping, following what Vaughn, Feldhusen, and Asher (1991) suggested as a possible method to best serve students who are gifted.

In an investigation of an elementary gifted pull-out model, Ritrievi (1988) found that 65.9 percent of the total behaviors studied in the category of perceived worth of instructional time spent were related as valuable learning experiences. Students as well as parents found time in the pull-out program to be beneficial, with students reporting transformations of viewpoints. Adults commented on the way projects were utilized to

benefit more than one party, such as one project which involved problem solving to help other students not miss their bus, or writing the script and building the set for the school Christmas program. This was in contrast to the 20.3 percent of responses that were related as negative, or caused conflict. In the same study, Ritrievi (1988) found that nearly 59 percent of respondents were penalized or felt pressure for not finishing work missed in-class. These type of negative responses engender questions of how effective pull-out programs are and if there are better ways to go about meeting the needs of students who are gifted in our schools.

Callahan and Hertberg-Davis (2013) stated that although pull-out programs may address the needs of students who are gifted for a certain percentage of their week, their time in the classroom is important, and pull-out programs only fulfill part of the variety of needs that students who are gifted present. Classroom teacher preparation is one major area that experts critique as needing improvement. The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) recommended that all teachers should have three skill sets when working with students who are gifted. First, teachers should be able to recognize the characteristics, milestones and learning differences of students who are gifted, including their socio-emotional needs. Second, all teachers should design and modify lessons or curriculum to enhance students' creativity, depth of study or acceleration. Finally, teachers should be familiar with and utilize instructional strategies that are appropriate for students who are gifted. The teachers in Ritrievi's (1988) study often were lacking in these areas, having students complete work they had missed for pull-out programs at recess or at home, and not following best practices for gifted and talented instruction.

Students participating in this research project had available to them and participated in a variety of gifted program models. The district offers a school-within-a-school program for the highly gifted. Acceleration is presented as another option to students when appropriate and students who are identified as qualifying for gifted services are placed in cluster groups within mainstream classrooms, where they also receive pull-out instruction.

***School-within-a-school programs.*** Students participating in this study have the option of being assessed for entry into a highly gifted school-within-a-school program. Dewees (1999) stated, "The school-within-a-school model has the greatest levels of autonomy, separateness, and distinctiveness. Students follow a separate education program, have their own faculty, and identify with their subschool unit" (p. 2).

Students are placed within a gifted school-within-a-school model in order to offer students what Toll (1991) described as full-time gifted programming. Toll (1991) claimed that full-time gifted programming is more conducive to meeting the range of needs of learners who are gifted throughout the school day. The positives can outweigh the negatives in a well-planned full-time gifted model. Students are able to avoid scheduling issues that pull-out programs present, enrichment is provided in all academic areas and there are more opportunities to participate in a variety of instructional approaches, such as cross-grouping (Toll, 1991). Students who are not chosen or who decline the opportunity to participate in these types of gifted centers can face academic or social obstacles.

Matthews and Kitchen (2007) surveyed teachers and students at three separate secondary schools with gifted school-within-a-school programs in Canada. Matthews and

Kitchen received positive results regarding whether or not respondents would recommend the gifted school program to others. The most concerning of the findings regarded the relationships between participants in the gifted and those in the "normal" program. Friction between participants in both programs and what was considered unfair or biased treatment was perceived as being directed towards the gifted program, with students citing extra field trip opportunities or extra privileges. Matthews and Kitchen (2007) made a variety of recommendations for schools with similar programs. They recommended that educators take on the task of communicating the nature and rationale behind enrichment programs as well as recognize different paths to maximize achievement and providing such options to all students.

Some students participating in this research project could qualify for the district's school-within-a-school program, but their parents would need to make the decision to either change schools and leave immersion behind or opt out in order to keep their student in the immersion program. Parents of these students would need to weigh the benefits of the non-immersion school-within-a-school program from other interventions within the immersion program, such as cluster grouping.

***Cluster grouping.*** Coleman (1995) outlined three important factors when meeting the needs of students who are gifted: how cluster grouping is used, the support teachers receive, and the differentiation options presented to the students. Classroom teachers are already asked to perform a multitude of tasks and fulfill a variety of roles during student contact time. Coleman (1995) emphasized the importance of making resources available to teachers, both material and in the form of gifted specialists. The above follows the same line of thinking presented by the NAGC, that teacher preparation is paramount.

Classroom teachers who are given a gifted cluster should be prepared both instructionally as well as with materials and specialist teachers to use as resources.

Fiedler, Lange and Winebrenner (1993) outlined common objections to gifted cluster grouping, including the critique that cluster grouping is the same as tracking. When students are tracked, they are placed in a specific group based on ability, and there is little to no movement between groups, even over long periods of time, which can lead to the disenfranchisement of students in the lower tracks. According to Fiedler, Lange and Winebrenner (1993), cluster grouping can also be viewed as elitist, meaning that students within the cluster group are often seen as superior to those who are not. The authors argue that students who are academically advanced are not better than other students, but rather need educators to use strategies to provide motivation and academic challenges to ensure they continue to maximize their learning.

Porcher (2007) investigated the relationship between types of differentiation within gifted cluster classrooms in Georgia. According to the study, gifted clusters are used in Georgia because of the cost effectiveness of not having to hire a resource teacher. Since schools would not be providing a specialist as a resource, cluster teachers needed to have a gifted endorsement. This is contrary to part of the definition that Coleman (1995) put forth as the guidelines for teaching gifted clusters, in which resource teachers play a role in the fulfillment of the needs of students who are gifted in a cluster class. This is yet another example of the importance of teacher preparation. Although a gifted endorsement is a way classroom teachers can be better prepared to meet the needs of their students who are gifted, it does not replace the preparation and insight that a resource teacher may bring. Kell, Lubinski, and Benbow (2013), (as cited in Chen, 2014) stressed the idea that

although students who are gifted could master new information at high speeds, schools found it difficult to accommodate such a pace, and teachers focused on helping learners who are struggling instead. The lack of teacher training on pacing, acceleration and other concepts related to gifted education can mean frustration and underachievement for their students who are gifted.

The question becomes, then, are teachers that hold a gifted endorsement as prepared to teach students who are gifted as those who rely on specialist support? Porcher (2007) concluded that any teacher who works with students who are gifted should have the skills to provide what was deemed as "appropriate and meaningful instruction" (p. 80). The call for teachers to be better prepared to serve students who are gifted through training is directly in line with the NAGC standards. More specifically, however, Porcher (2007) found that "teachers need additional training in *when* to differentiate instruction and *how* to differentiate instruction in order to meet the specific learning needs of the student" (p. 81).

Hoover, Sayler, and Feldhusen (1993) also cited the importance of cluster group teachers being trained in the differentiation and characteristics of the gifted. Students who are not included in the cluster grouping can be included in some activities or projects, creating availability of instruction and materials to a wider audience. Challenges arise when materials are not as widely available, or require translation, such as within immersion education. Immersion students participating in this survey receive gifted services in English, but not in the target language of Spanish. In order to better adhere to the total immersion approach at the school in question, materials should be presented to students in the target language.

## Immersion Education

Immersion education in the district in question is described as a total immersion model. According to Lenker and Rhodes (2007), total immersion is one of a variety of immersion models that are implemented throughout the United States. Students in early elementary grades (Kindergarten through second grade) receive all instruction in the target language, or in this case, in Spanish. Students learn content and skills through the target language. Students in upper elementary grades (third through fifth) have gradually increased instructional time in English. This section focuses on the definition of and concepts behind immersion education models as well as the resources available for students in Spanish immersion programs.

**Immersion education models.** According to *French Immersion in Manitoba: A Handbook for School Leaders* (2007), the immersion education model began in Quebec, Canada in 1965 as an experiment, quickly gaining support by 1973, with the opening of the first immersion school of Manitoba. Immersion education is now practiced in many countries with a range of implementation models and languages. Richards (1994) stated that "Language cannot stand apart from content learning; rather, language should be acquired through content learning just as content may be learned through language" (p. 178). A variety of organizations have developed to support this view of education through language immersion.

The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (2016) defined the languages used in immersion education as minority languages, or languages other than that spoken by the majority of people in a given area, such as Spanish in the U.S., and majority languages, or a language that is used by the majority of a population in a given

area, such as English in the U.S. Lenker & Rhodes (2007) also discussed a third category of languages, often described as Heritage or Indigenous languages. These languages are spoken in communities but are not a majority language. One example is the Hawaiian language. Parents and communities appreciate how these programs can act as part of a preservation of culture.

The Center for Applied Linguistics' *Directory of Foreign Language Immersion Programs in U.S. Schools* (2011) gathered its information on three definitions of immersion programs: total immersion, partial immersion and two-way immersion. The following sections will focus on the definition and implementation of these programs.

***Total immersion.*** Total immersion is what comes to mind for many when immersion education is mentioned. The Center for Applied Linguistics (2011) defined total immersion as "Programs in which all or almost all subjects taught in the lower grades (K-2) are taught in the foreign language; instruction in English usually increases in the upper grades (3-6) to 20%-50%, depending on the program" (para. 6). According to the *Directory of Foreign Language Immersion Programs in U.S. Schools* (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011), the top minority languages taught in the United States are Spanish and French. This is not surprising considering the French-immersion origins of immersion education in Canada and the growing population of native Spanish speakers in the United States. Schools providing total immersion programs display a variety of ways to implement the target language instruction, and at times become hampered by funding or the availability of qualified immersion teachers. Richards (1994) outlined the skill set that an immersion teacher must demonstrate in addition to those displayed by native-language teachers in order to ensure that students are learning the content presented as

well as the target language:

> ...must be skilled in negotiating meaning; they must have well-developed skills in monitoring student performance; they must be expert in instructional decision making; they must serve as a role model for the use of language, cultural behaviors, and learning strategies; and they need to structure the environment to facilitate language learning. (p. 167)

Finding and hiring teachers with these skills as well as proficiency in the target language can be difficult. According to the U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education (2016), all states in the midwest with the exception of one reported a shortage of teachers for the 2016-2017 school year in the area of languages. Some midwest states reported shortages in the area of languages every year available in the report, from 1990 through 2017.

Locating teachers who hold teaching licenses and who are fluent in the target language is also a challenge. Von Houten (2009) cited a lack of undergraduate students who take or graduate with a foreign language degree, the negative impact of No Child Left Behind Act's requirement for "highly qualified" teachers on emergency licenses, as well as changing demands for languages as some of the factors behind the teacher shortage. Students at some schools receive all subjects from literacy to art in the target language, and other schools provide instruction in core subjects in the target language, but provide specialist classes, such as P.E. and art in English. The range of immersion is not only observed in a total immersion model, but in other models as well, such as partial immersion.

***Partial immersion.*** In contrast to a total immersion approach, partial immersion provides students and teachers with opportunities to use their first language. According to the *Directory of Foreign Language Immersion Programs in U.S. Schools* (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011) Partial immersion is defined as "Programs in which up to 50% of subjects are taught in the foreign language;in some programs, the material taught in the foreign language is reinforced in English" (para 6). The concept behind partial immersion is scaffolding, or utilizing Vygotsky's concept of students' zones of proximal development, where students use their first language to aid their achievement in a second language task. Gearon (2010) found that students using both their first and the target language to complete a task allowed for late-immersion students, or students who have experienced immersion for several years (in that study, 8) to continue without long pauses or struggles to negotiate meaning. Partial immersion is in contrast to the total immersion program that students in this study experience, where English is introduced as its own subject instead of being used to reinforce the concepts being taught. .

In some countries, partial immersion gives way to multilingualism rather than bilingualism. Students in Swedish immersion schools in Finland are immersed in Swedish, Finnish and then a third language, such as English, by grade two. Tedick, Christian, and Fortune (2011) outlined the optional fourth language, often German, that is incorporated into this multilinguistic European approach. Although this approach is rare in the United States, some programs are attempting a more inclusive approach through two-way immersion, such as Puente de Hozho Dual Language Program in Flagstaff, AZ.

***Two-way immersion.*** Two-Way immersion can also be referred to as dual immersion. The *Directory of Foreign Language Immersion Programs in U.S. Schools*

(Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011) defined Two-Way Immersion (TWI) as "Programs that give equal emphasis to English and a non-English language and in which one to two thirds of the students are native speakers of the non-English language, with the remainder being native speakers of English" (para. 6). The difference between TWI and other immersion programs lies within the needs of the students participating in the program. Students in other immersion programs in the United States are generally native English speakers learning a minority language, while two-way immersion students benefit from instruction in English as well as the minority language.

Christian, Howard, and Loeb (2000) stated that TWI works best when the populations of English-speaking and minority-speaking students are balanced. Districts with a large majority of native English-speakers or districts with a wide range of languages with no large minority may have difficulties implementing TWI programs. Programs that are successful have options as to how to implement language instruction. Christian, Howard, and Loeb (2000) cited the three ways in which schools can differ in language instruction as time, content and person. Some schools may choose to designate content classes into majority and minority languages, control language instruction by days or minutes or simply have specific teachers that always instruct and interact in either the minority or majority language.

One critique of TWI presented by Christian, Howard, and Loeb (2000) is that it will lead to a power gap between minority and majority groups of students, leading to the program serving the needs of the middle-class English-speaking students while neglecting those of the minority-speaking population. Scanlan and Palmer (2009) cited multiple barriers to equal service, such as the informal "gatekeeping" of school

placement lotteries, where minority students are often entered much later than their white counterparts. Palmer (2009) highlighted the paradoxical expectations on language learning for TWI minority language dominant students in comparison with their English dominant counterparts as inherently biased. Students who are non-native English speakers in a TWI program are viewed as needing to learn English and this is simply another expectation whiting their learning, whereas an English-speaking student who is learning a foreign language is viewed as a success and deserving of praise.

Fortune (2012) outlined the challenges presented to immersion education cited the design, implementation and support of these programs to be paramount. Finding qualified teachers who can implement the scarce content and language appropriate curriculum can be challenging for immersion programs. As earlier stated, world languages continue to be an area of teacher shortage, due to a multitude of factors including negative societal attitudes toward foreign languages, as well as rigorous licensure expectations and what is perceived as not enough demand for language teachers. Cultural differences in expectations and teaching as well as balance of English-Target language instruction in the later years of immersion programming also create new hurdles. One challenge addressed will be the resources available to students in immersion programs. TWI is not used in the district in question because of its fairly homogeneous population.

Students participating in this study receive instruction in the target language of Spanish through a total immersion model. The philosophy that all subjects and instruction should be delivered in the target language led to the investigation of what resources are available to students who are gifted in immersion programs, and what still needs to be developed. In order for students to investigate self-selected topics, enough information in

the target language should be made available.

**Resources available to immersion students.** Although modern immersion education started over fifty years ago in Canada (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2007), programs and educators still run into issues when choosing, developing and implementing immersion curriculum. Each language needs appropriate curriculum in the specific target language. For example, a curriculum developed for a Spanish immersion program provides little aid to those teaching in a Mandarin immersion setting. Commonly taught languages, such as Spanish and French, have more classroom materials already developed in comparison to less commonly taught languages (LCTL) such as Hindi or Native American languages. Districts with immersion and English-only classrooms need to address the needs of all student populations as well as parent and community expectations of rigor and balance between programs.

Translated curricula from the English language are now more widely available. McGraw-Hill Education and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt are companies that have made their textbooks and resources available in other languages. The issue with immersion education is that immersion students and educators do not require the text to be simply translated into the target language, although it is fortunate when it happens. According to Kong (2015), immersion education requires teachers to not only have content and knowledge goals in mind, but also a link to language-learning objectives. Since immersion students are generally not native speakers of the target language, educators need either plan the curriculum themselves or be provided with a curriculum that focus on identifying the language objectives such as vocabulary or grammar. Without this

careful planning, students can easily become lost or miss the content or knowledge objectives of a lesson or unit.

Students in the district in question have three types of curriculum presented to them: authentic texts (written by a native speaker, for native speakers), teacher-translated professionally developed curriculum, and teacher-created and translated units. Teachers are encouraged to participate in the selection of curriculum, but also are often needed to translate it to the target language. When developing the intervention of independent investigations, there was a gap in the resources and curriculum available to immersion students who are gifted. Although grade-level curriculum is translated for them into the target language, gifted services are still provided in English. Since students participating in this study follow a total immersion model and not the described partial or two-way immersion models, students require appropriate gifted curriculum to be presented in the target language. Independent investigations would allow immersion students who are gifted some choice in their learning, within the framework of a total immersion model.

**Independent Investigations**

The proposed intervention to increase the engagement of students who are gifted is the implementation of independent investigations. Independent investigations is a differentiated instruction practice that is based off of the Renzulli Schoolwide Enrichment Model (Pendrey, 2015). This approach was selected for a variety of reasons: versions of this model are used as a stand-alone unit within the gifted program in the school in question, and students have reported interest in their topics. Other schools in the district also use a modified version of independent investigations for all students. After reading about the positive impact Renzulli Type III interventions have on students, I

decided to investigate how it could impact my immersion students who are gifted. This section will define the proposed intervention, outline results of similar programs as well as discuss the possible consequences of disengaged students who are gifted.

**Renzulli schoolwide enrichment model.** Renzulli and Purcell (1995) claimed that a schoolwide enrichment model results in "greater learning by more motivated students" (p. 14), and moreover, cited two contributing factors: greater student engagement throughout the process, and the mutual job of parents and teachers to foster student creativity. Originally developed in the 1970s and adopted by schools in the northeastern United States for gifted and talented students, the model has undergone additional research and modifications in practice (Renzulli & Renzulli, 2010). According to Renzulli and Renzulli (2010), the model is based on gifted behaviors instead of the characteristics of gifted individuals. This is similar to using person-first language, intentionally focusing on the development of creativity and gifted behaviors instead of on the giftedness of a student. Renzulli and Renzulli (2010) hope that this will be beneficial not only for those who have been identified as gifted, but also those who have the potential for benefiting from similar types of interventions. Originally, the model exposed students to new topics and encouraged students to investigate deeper. Kettle, Renzulli and Rizza (1998) described three types of enrichment that happens under a schoolwide enrichment model: Type I, or exploratory activities, Type II, or group training activities, and Type III, or investigations of real problems. This investigation will be implementing a Type III activity, or more specifically, student independent investigations. Renzulli and Renzulli (2010) described three goals of the schoolwide enrichment model as: to maintain and expand services to high potential students, to integrate options for high potential

students to face challenges within general education programs and to maintain the positions of gifted education specialists and other educators needed to implement the program. This is exactly what a program of independent investigations does: it allows students who are gifted the access to more appropriate challenges within the mainstream classroom under the guidance of the mainstream and gifted specialist teacher.

Pendrey (2015) conducted a study over a period of three years, with the Renzulli schoolwide enrichment model as an independent variable, and compared it to a control group in order to determine if the model would correlate with higher standardized test scores for elementary students. The findings were positive, and Pendrey (2015) highly stressed the importance of teacher buy-in to an enrichment model. Olenchak and Renzulli's (1989) study on the effectiveness of the schoolwide enrichment model found that schools that adopted the model enjoyed more favorable attitudes towards education on both the parts of the students and teachers.

For my study, I will be utilizing independent investigations, which is a program that aligns with Renzulli's schoolwide enrichment model in several ways. Students will be exposed to new topics and will be taking the time to investigate topics deeper, all within the framework of the general education setting. Programs similar to Renzulli's schoolwide enrichment model have found successes in allowing students the freedom to choose the topics they will be investigating.

**Results from similar programs.** According to Juliani (2014), the founders of Google credited their childhood experiences in Montessori to their later life successes. The ideas and philosophies they implemented within their business, such as "20% Time," where employees could devote time to develop new ideas or projects, were influenced by

the concepts found in Montessori philosophies. Juliani (2014) made the connection between Google's "20% Time" and Montessori education, with an example being having the freedom to explore something chosen based on individualized interests. Google's "20% Time" has also been used in classrooms with positive results. Elementary teachers have begun to use a similar idea, which is being called Genius Hour. According to Kessler (2013):

> The teacher provides a set amount of time for the students to work on their passion projects. Students are then challenged to explore something to do a project over that they want to learn about. They spend several weeks researching the topic before they start creating a product that will be shared with the class/school/world. Deadlines are limited and creativity is encouraged. Throughout the process the teacher facilitates the student projects to ensure that they are on task. (para. 4)

Devoting time to an interest can also be thought of as following your passion. Maiers and Sandvold (2011) described passion as "action orientated" (Chapter 2, Section 2, para. 3) and related it to inquiry and stated that "learning driven by passion functions like a love that endures for a long time" (Chapter 2, Section 3, para. 4). The "Clubhouse Learning" framework that Maiers and Sandvold (2011) outlined evoked students and teachers searching for new information and presenting it to one another, in a business-like setting, involving meetings, problem-solving together, with teachers in the role of expert learners.

Programs that incorporate student-led learning activities focusing on student interests have shown positive correlations with increased student engagement and academic achievement. One example of this was Pendrey's (2015) study that showed a

positive correlation between the implementation of Renzulli's schoolwide enrichment model and increases in standardized test scores. Students attending the school that adopted the SEM had had an increased number of students scoring in the "exceeds expectations" category of the CRCT in comparison to the control group, at times 7% higher. With $p < 0.05$, the 0.01477 was not statistically significant, which indicated that the Renzulli SEM had a positive effect on students attending the school that implemented the SEM (Pendrey, 2015).

Students who are gifted and who do not have access to or do not participate in programs that engage and challenge them can face negative consequences, such as a higher risks of dropout and potential behavioral challenges. Landis and Reschly (2013) stated that "Engagement may be one of the few alterable variables that can effectively prevent dropout and is open to intervention for gifted students" (p. 227). This observation highlights one of the reasons behind this study: to find ways to positively impact student engagement in order to improve the overall educational experiences for immersion students who are gifted.

**Consequences of disengagement for students who are gifted.** Students who become disengaged at school can suffer from a multitude of negative individual and social consequences, the most severe being pushed out of school. Renzulli and Park (2000) found that students who are gifted and who drop out of school shared lower educational aspirations as well as a dislike for school or failing grades, among other issues. Although Renzulli and Park (2000) did not find a large difference in the dropout rates between students who are gifted and students who are not, Landis and Reschly (2013) examined and compared student dropout between mainstream and students who

are gifted and found several indicators of student dropout for both the gifted and mainstream student; Academic and Behavioral engagement as well as school preparation. This highlights the fact that students who are gifted face not only the same challenges as a non-gifted student in the area of engagement, but also compound these frustrations with additional challenges, such as becoming accustomed to not needing study skills, then requiring these skills later but being unable to access them due to lack of practice and instruction. Betts and Neihart (1988) observed that students who are gifted and who drop out of school often become mad at "adults and with themselves because the system has not met their needs for many years and they feel rejected" (p. 252). Renzulli and Park (2000) made several recommendations to educators to reduce the risk of student dropout, such as providing a challenging curriculum that address students' particular interests.

Colangelo, Assouline and Gross (2004) described the lack of resources or action on the part of schools and other stakeholders as a disgrace, and claimed that implementing programs that increase student engagement and provide the appropriate challenge to students who are gifted will avoid "years of loneliness and social isolation for students who don't fit in with age-peers and who are hungry for friends who share similar interests" (p. 3).

The review of the literature demonstrated a general lack of research in the area of dropout rates among students who are gifted. The aim of this research project is to improve student engagement among learners who are in gifted immersion settings and avoid the issues that stem from disengagement and disillusionment with their schooling experience. The next section will focus on the engagement of immersion students who are gifted and strategies to build on their strengths.

## Student Engagement

McCormick (2012) described student engagement as a three-pronged framework including behavioral, cognitive, and motivational/emotional engagement. Dweck (2006) investigated the relationship between different mindsets and their relationship to learning and growth. Students who are gifted demonstrate tendencies such as perfectionism (Greenspon, 2013) and need specific guidance to not fall victim to apathy when they do not attain their goals. This section will focus on cognitive and motivational/emotional engagement of immersion students who are gifted and strategies for building on their strengths.

**Engagement of immersion students who are gifted.** McCormick (2012) outlined how early studies only focused on engagement as seen in student participation, or "whatever could be physically seen 'doing' in a classroom" (p. 7). McCormick (2012) went on to explain that engagement could be seen as having three components: behavioral, cognitive and motivational/emotional. Since students who are gifted can face challenges in their social and emotional well-being due to issues with asynchronous development or perfectionism, schools need to take into account these needs when addressing gifted programs. For example, McCormick (2012) suggested as remedies mentor programs and providing time with high-ability peers, such as with cluster grouping.

Challenges students who are gifted face may become compounded by immersion education. The very nature of immersion is to be open and understand that it is impossible to use the target language perfectly. This is an added frustration to students who are already struggling with perfectionism. Dweck (2006) suggested that educators

take a serious look at the underlying messages we are sending to our students about their successes and failures. Statements that relate learning quickly to being intelligent lead to what Dweck (2006) termed a fixed mindset, where successes and failures are seen to be brought on by intelligence and not determination or hard work. Immersion teachers working with students who are gifted would be twice as wise to use Dweck's (2006) growth mindset approach; to send messages that the process of learning and effort, especially a second language, are the true markings of success. Students who are gifted and who struggle with perfectionism with the added challenge of navigating their education in a second language would doubly benefit from teachers who send the message that hard work, and not only intelligence, is likely to lead to success and growth in learning. With the above in mind, I pose the question: what should be done to support the academic needs of immersion students who are gifted?

**Engagement Strategies.** McCormick (2012) suggested that students who are gifted should have ample time with their same-ability intellectual peers. Mentorships or curriculum that includes persons who are gifted as role models were also suggested as ways to improve the support given to students who are gifted. McCormick (2012) also stated that "True student engagement is a combination of the body, mind, and heart" (p. 34). In her study of the engagement of students who are gifted, McCormick (2012) found three factors that parents, students, and teachers all described as key to elicit student engagement: learning should be interactive, students should be interested in what is being taught, and students should have the opportunity to be creative while learning. Garfinkel, Allen and Neuharth-Pritchett (1993) found that affective objectives that are included into immersion curriculum create a more positive attitude towards the learning process, and

that “outcomes may be achieved in the foreign language classroom when there is an atmosphere that encourages positive attitudes and creative behavior. Personalizing the material and making language learning seem realistic are important considerations” (p. 238).

Siemer (2009) lamented the effects of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), when the needs of students who are gifted were put behind students who are below proficiency in math and reading. Siemer (2009) called for a federal definition of giftedness as well as funding, in addition to more teacher training and the inclusion of students who are gifted as a subgroup of NCLB, so that students would not be “allowed to skate through on their high test scores without being challenged to reach their educational potential” (p. 560). A focus on “teaching to the test” and not involving the strategies put forth, such as pursuing interests or allowing for creativity, is another factor playing into the disengagement of students who are gifted.

McCormick (2002) as well as Garfinkel, Allen and Neuharth-Pritchett (1993), highlighted different strategies to increase the engagement of students who are gifted, with one common factor: careful planning and implementation. In order for learning to be interactive, allow creativity, and include affective objectives, educators must review units and outcomes in order to identify areas of student interest, create opportunities for creativity and specifically plan for affective objectives within academic lessons.

**Summary**

After reviewing the literature, there appeared to be a lack of research that informs the intersecting topics of gifted and immersion education. This study probes the effect of independent investigations, an intervention based on Renzulli’s schoolwide enrichment

model, on the engagement of elementary students who are gifted participating in a Spanish immersion program. The models of gifted education discussed in this chapter describe those currently in place that serve students in the district in question, including cluster grouping and pull-out models. Immersion education models were also reviewed, including the total immersion model in place in the district in question, in contrast with other popular immersion program models. The proposed intervention of independent investigations was described as a Type III enrichment, from Renzulli's schoolwide enrichment model. The section on student engagement addressed the specific issues and strategies that are recommended for use with gifted and immersion students. These topics provide context and background to my research question as well as highlight the need for more investigation into the intersecting themes of gifted and immersion education.

Chapter three outlines how a mixed-methods approach allowed for more in-depth insights into the engagement of immersion students who are gifted. The student population participating as well as a description of the location of the study are included in order to gain a better perspective of the study. The data collection tools, research instruments as well as data analysis procedures are outlined with the intent of transparency. Steps regarding human subjects approval are also outlined.

# CHAPTER THREE

## RESEARCH METHODS

My experiences as a teacher who has been attempting to provide appropriate and engaging curriculum to immersion students who are gifted led me to question how to best serve their needs. This action research project was designed to answer the question: *What is the impact of independent investigations on the engagement of students labeled as gifted in the elementary immersion setting?* The research in Chapter two outlined the studies and practices for each individual area involved in this question: gifted education, immersion education, student engagement as well as the proposed intervention of independent investigations.

This chapter addresses how a mixed-methods approach lends a deeper view into the engagement of elementary students who are gifted. The explanatory sequential method used to investigate the research question begins with quantitative data through questionnaires and it is expanded upon during qualitative data collection including interviews and informal observations. The fourth-grade Spanish immersion students who are participating in this study have been identified as gifted and attend a large suburban elementary school in the Midwest. Although the district in question provides gifted education for all identified students, resources for immersion students who are gifted in the target language are quite limited. The independent investigation model is used to investigate student engagement before, during and after the implementation of the intervention. Answers from student questionnaires are triangulated with comments from the student interviews as well as observations in order to provide a better picture of the effect of independent investigations on Spanish immersion students who are gifted.

## Methodology

The paradigms that have been chosen to investigate the research is mixed-methods. I chose this approach in order to investigate the perspectives and engagement of immersion students who are gifted before and after the implementation of independent investigations. The way that Hesse-Biber (2014) described the premise of using data collected from quantitative methods to inform and shape analysis of the qualitative measures resonated with me. Students will be able to explain their reasoning and level of engagement in different ways throughout the process through questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Creswell (2014) stated that a mixed-methods approach is a way to combine the best of qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to provide a more complete understanding of research than any one approach could on its own.

The specific research method I have chosen is an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Selected immersion students who are gifted were surveyed at the beginning of the project, the data were analyzed, and then, I followed up with interviews and observations to help explain and expand on the quantitative data collected. This is the very example that Creswell (2014) gave as to what an explanatory sequential method might involve: qualitative data that supplements the initial quantitative data collected. Using students' explanations and observations of lessons not only informs the analysis of the quantitative data I collected on student engagement, but also helped identify pieces of the proposed intervention that are deemed as successful or seen as failing to engage students.

## Participants and Location

The setting for this project is in an affluent suburban school district in the Midwest that offers a variety of options for enrollment in language immersion as well as English-only classrooms. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median household income for the area in 2014 was between $80,068 and $145,625, which is double the median household income of $60,828 for the state in the same year. According to the Minnesota Department of Education's Minnesota Report card (2016), the school district serves approximately 10,000 students who are overwhelmingly white (86 percent) and coming from well-resourced families (only 7 percent of students qualify for free and reduced lunch). Staff at the site in question is a mix of native English and native Spanish speakers; approximately two thirds of the immersion teachers are native Spanish speakers. This elementary school has approximately 850 students in a K-5 setting and belongs to a district that prides itself on the high level of community and parental involvement in their student's education. Families participating in the Spanish immersion program do so with the understanding that they are committing to a six-year program for their child.

Participants in the study are eleven fourth grade Spanish immersion students who are classified as gifted and talented. All students have qualified for gifted services in a pull-out/cluster program; however, none have been identified as "highly gifted" with an I.Q. above 140. Students who are identified as highly gifted in the immersion program have two options: they may continue with their gifted services within the immersion program, a gifted cluster classroom and a pull-out session once a week; or, parents may choose to send them to the district's gifted school-within-a-school model with limited access to the target language. The concerns for parents of students who are highly gifted

and who wish to continue with language immersion despite the availability of a highly gifted school is what led to this investigation. The eleven students who participated in this project are in their fifth year of Spanish immersion. These students are all self-identified as White. About one-third have parents who immigrated to the United States, or who are second-generation Americans. Their parents come from a variety of places such as England, Russia, Guyana and Latin America.

**Data Collection**

After students had time to settle into a new school year and I had time to identify which of them to consider for this study I gathered their and their parents' or guardians' permissions for their participation. After parent and guardian permission was acquired (Appendix A), I met with students individually in a private hallway space to explain the parameters of my research, the reasoning behind it, and what their participation would entail. Confidentiality was explained as well as their right to voluntarily participate. Students signed a consent form in Spanish acknowledging their understanding of the research. From there, quantitative data was collected from a student engagement questionnaire (Appendix B) in November 2016. As I analyzed these data, I gave students a Spanish translated *Interest-A-Lyzer* questionnaire by Renzulli (1977) where they identified their potential interests (Appendix C) and then filled out the translated *My Way…An Expression Style Inventory* developed by Kettle, Renzulli and Rizza (Appendix D) to find different platforms in which they could present their learning. Students were then introduced to the independent investigations platform. They were guided through choosing a topic and developing questions with a translated version of Passion Time packets from another school in the district (Appendix E). Students then investigated and

took notes using identified Spanish language websites (Appendix F). Thereafter, students chose a platform to create a presentation based on Kettle, Renzulli and Rizza's *My Way… An Expression Style inventory*. Some examples of possible presentations were: a Google slides presentation, a poster, 3D models, performances or the use of coding platforms to create a game or another project.

After the completion of their projects, students reviewed their work with me, presented to the class and completed a reflection page (Appendix G) on what they learned and what they could do to improve their work in the next round. After the completion of their reflection on their first investigation, I conducted interviews and asked extension questions based on their responses to the engagement survey before beginning their projects and reflection responses after completing their project. I conducted group interviews in February 2017 (Appendix H) regarding their experiences in this experiment and to assess their engagement throughout the process. The data gathered from the initial student questionnaire were analyzed along with the results of the student style inventory as students were investigating their chosen themes. The responses to the initial questionnaire guided the direction of the group interviews at the end of this project. Student reflection page data was compared with answers from group interviews in order to gauge student engagement.

**Research Instruments**

Several instruments were used to collect both the quantitative and qualitative data. Renzulli's (1977) *Interest-A-Lyzer* and Kettle, Renzulli and Rizza's *My Way...An Expression Style Inventory* were translated into Spanish for students to explore their interests and possible product options. At the beginning of the process, student

engagement was gauged with answers from questionnaires. Throughout the development of students' projects, the teacher performed multiple check-ins to document student engagement. Students also filled out a reflection piece after their product presentations that provided additional feedback and possible suggestions for improvement as well as participated in group interviews in order to gather data on their levels of engagement in their learning.

**Interest-A-Lyzer.** A translated form of Renzulli's (1977) *Interest-A-Lyzer* (Appendix C) allowed students to explore their interests and identify possible areas of investigation for independent investigations. This survey was introduced as a tool for students, something that would help them better identify their own interests. There was an emphasis to present this survey as a tool and not a test, so students felt more at ease expressing what they believe was important instead of considering what their peers or teachers would think of their answers. It asked students to imagine different situations, such as: they are a collector, what are they collecting? It contains ten sections that were used to detect patterns in students' interest and how this all impacted their choice of investigation and ultimately their engagement in the learning environment.

**My Way...An Expression Style Inventory.** Another translated student-based survey that was presented to students was Kettle, Renzulli and Rizza's *My Way...An Expression Style Inventory* (Appendix D). It was used to identify different products that students could create to demonstrate what they had learned through their independent investigations. Students were again advised that this was a tool to aid them in finding a product to create that interested them, and not a test or comparison of any kind. There are fifty examples of products and a score sheet for different product categories, such as

audio/visual. These data were also used to identify patterns in student interest, or how they utilized suggestions that may or may not have improved their overall engagement.

**Student questionnaires.** Before beginning the process of independent investigations, qualitative data were gathered from a student questionnaire in Spanish (Appendix B) that was created based on questions from the Institute for Research and Reform in Education (1998) Research Assessment Package For Schools (RAPS). Questions from three subdomains within RAPS were used: Experiences of Support from Teachers, Perceived Autonomy, and "Additional." Questions were also based on the Learning-Gardens Educational Assessment Group (2008) student survey.

**Student group interviews**. Group interviews using set questions (Appendix H) were conducted at the end of the intervention to hear student opinions regarding independent investigations and find common experiences and perceptions of their engagement. Main themes of questions were based on the subdomains of the questionnaire: teacher support, autonomy and choice, as well as feelings about school in general.

**Student reflection piece.** Students were also asked to fill out a student reflection piece after presenting their work (Appendix G). It asked what students had learned as well as what they would change or do better in the next round. This information was used to see where students were struggling in the process as well as what they were highlighting as important learning and was compared the results to the questionnaires, interviews and observations.

Both quantitative data from the translated questionnaires and qualitative data taken from observations, student reflections and interviews were analyzed. The students

were guided by the translated versions of Kettle, Renzulli and Rizza's *My Way...An Expression Style Inventory* as well as Renzulli's (1977) *Interest-A-Lyzer* where they were able to identify their interests and the products that sparked their curiosity. Before beginning the intervention, student engagement was gauged through their responses to a questionnaire. While going through the independent investigation process, students were guided by guiding questions and a checklist. After students completed their projects, they filled out a reflection piece, which also provided data on what students were focusing on and what they were still struggling with. All of these data collected was analyzed within the lens of the previously mentioned subdomains.

**Data Analysis**

In order to analyze the quantitative datasets, I followed similar subdomains of both RAPS and the Lab ED Assessment Package to create totals to find areas of concern. Specific areas of focus were: experiences in terms of of support from teachers, perceived autonomy and what was termed as "Additional" which included the subdomains of work habits, and reasoning behind motivations to learn. Common answers were identified and average scores were calculated for different subdomains. Qualitative data were triangulated by comparing answers from the questionnaire with comments from the group interviews. Group interviews at the end of the project were taken in anecdotal form and compared with initial student perspectives expressed in questionnaires.

**Human Subject Review**

This project received school district (Appendix I) as well as Hamline University's Human Subjects approval (Appendix J) in October 2016. Parental and guardian agreement for their child to participate was procured through consent forms, which

described the research project, guaranteed voluntary participation as well as confidentiality. Students' identities were protected by using pseudonyms when presenting data from interview transcripts and questionnaires.

The possible benefits of this research project as explained to students and their parents were increased student engagement and greater learner choice within the classroom. Spanish immersion teachers with students who are gifted will also be able to use the translations of all documents used in this study in their own classrooms.

**Conclusion**

This study was conducted using a mixed-methods paradigm, specifically an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, in order to answer the question *What is the impact of independent investigations on the engagement of students labeled as gifted in the elementary immersion setting?* Quantitative data gathered at the beginning of the study was used to inform qualitative measures later in the study. Participants were a group of immersion fourth graders who are gifted from an affluent suburban district in the Midwest. Multiple aspects of this project were modified to better suit the setting of an immersion classroom, including the development and translation of questionnaires and other tools as well as the independent investigation intervention. Students progressed through inquiry, research, project development, presentation and self reflection at their own pace. Before proceeding with this study, consent and approval was gained from the district, parents, and the University's Human Subject Committee. Students' identities were protected throughout the implementation and results of this study through the use of pseudonyms. The next chapter will present the results of this study.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# RESULTS

This chapter addresses the results gathered from the study of the question: *What is the impact of independent investigations on the engagement of students labeled as gifted in the elementary immersion setting?* Data were collected via student questionnaires, Kettle, Renzulli and Rizza's *My Way...An Expression Style Inventory* as well as Renzulli's (1977) *Interest-A-Lyzer*, individual students' reflections along with group exit interviews. Quantitative data from the initial student questionnaires was analyzed and compared to qualitative data gathered throughout the four month process. Several themes and patterns emerged, and most were in line with what was discovered in the literature review.

Eleven fourth-grade students between the ages of nine and ten were chosen to participate in this study based on their previous identification and placement into the district's gifted program. All participants identified as White, and there were several students who brought the shared experience of having parents who immigrated to the United States.

## Research progression

Parents received all information regarding the study, and permission slips were signed and returned during the month of November 2016. Students were informed of how the project would proceed, that their participation would be used for this study, and they then signed a consent form (Appendix K). Students then met at lunchtime in a fourth grade classroom, at first weekly and, as the projects progressed, three times a week. At their first meeting, students completed a 32-question survey, some of which was

developed by modeling questions after RAPS and Learning-Gardens Educational Assessment Group's (2008) student survey, in order to gauge their attitudes and viewpoints on work, perceived autonomy, support from teachers as well as parents and friends.

In early December 2016, the participants completed a translated Spanish version of Renzulli's (1977) *Interest-A-Lyzer* to explore their areas of interest and examine new ideas before choosing a topic for their project. Students then completed a translated Spanish version of Kettle, Renzulli and Rizza's *My Way...An Expression Style Inventory* (Appendix D), which provided students with suggestions of forms of presentation and also gave students an overview of their preferred methods of communication. Participants then were able to use meeting time to review the results from their interest and expression style inventories, and were able to identify their areas of interest and possible products for the presentations.

In early January 2017, the students were given a packet designed to guide them through the process of choosing a topic and developing essential questions (Appendix E). Students arrived to the next session excited and full of ideas. They had completed the second page of the I.I. guidance packet, the "Preguntarse" sheet, and were given time to share their ideas with their classmates. They had the opportunity to help others formulate some of the essential questions for their projects. Most students ended up with approximately eight essential questions regarding their chosen topic that they wanted to investigate. Such questions were formulated with suggested question words in Spanish, such as "quién, cómo, cuándo" (who, how, when) as well as space for students to formulate their own questions. Some of Becca's essential questions about Mount

Rushmore, for example, were "¿Quiénes lo esculpieron?" (Who sculpted it?) and "¿Cuántos años está allí?" (How many years is it there?). The students went over the independent investigations contract, which is the third page of the I.I. guidance packet, agreed to the expectations and then signed it along with the teacher.

At this time, the participants began to show curiosity regarding how they would be conducting research, asking questions about resources and how to begin. During a mini-lesson, students were introduced to the concept of plagiarism and how to avoid it by using their own words and citing sources. Students also learned of one method of note-taking by dividing index cards using three columns: an essential question from their packet, information that they found to answer that question, and the source they used (Appendix L). Students were excited to hear that they would be receiving their own blank notecards and a list of Spanish language search engines and websites for them to investigate (Appendix F). Students were instructed to finish the "Escoger una idea" sheet, the fourth page of the I.I. guidance packet, as well as search for answers to at least two of their essential questions before next meeting.

Exactly one week later, all students arrived with their question sheets. Time was spent investigating and talking about the importance of keywords when conducting searches as well as how to list sources. A calendar was displayed and students cooperated in setting a timeline for their work. They set a goal that all of their questions would be investigated and answered by January 18, 2017 in order to discuss the types of presentations they would be creating. At this point, students expressed a need for more time and guidance with their investigations, so another meeting was set for the next day to allow for more work time. The next day, students spent time investigating and talking

about keywords and their sources. This was mainly a time for students to search and find help regarding difficult-to-find information.

The next few weeks began a routine of students meeting three times a week. Students spent more time investigating, utilizing and talking about keywords and sources. The goals of having all of their essential questions answered by January 18, 2017 was recalled and students showed excitement to finally discuss what kinds of presentations they would be completing. While students had time to finish up their investigations, they met with me to discuss what type of presentation they would like to create. The "A mi manera" profiles were reviewed, the options on which they scored highly were carefully discussed, and finally students choose different types of projects such as live drama, slideshow presentations, and video. Below is a table of student final choice of topic and style of presentation.

Table 1

*Student Topics and Presentation Styles*

| StudentName | Topic | Presentation |
|---|---|---|
| Becca | Mount Rushmore and Thomas Jefferson | Live drama-student plays Thomas Jefferson, uses Google slides for information and visuals regarding the history of Mount Rushmore |
| Nicki | The band "SNC" | Create a quiz on SNC based on the essential questions the student developed |
| Allison | Dragons | Music-combination of survey of student opinions and and results in a song |
| Eric | Circuits | Google slides-include video and visuals based on the student's essential questions |
| Tim | Steve Jobs | Short "autobiographical" video-student plays Steve Jobs and gives a first-person account of his life |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sam | Ambar | Create a videogame using Geometry Dash, questions used to play the game are the student's essential questions |
| Brad | Dinosaurs | Google Slides-organize information on each dinosaur into slides, and include visuals |
| Sarah | George Lucas | Write script of and then record audio of a mock radio interview with George Lucas; student playing the interviewer |
| Ella | J.K. Rowling | Live drama-student plays J.K. Rowling, and gives an "autobiographical" account of her life |
| Grace | History of Toilets | Live drama-student plays important figures in the history of toilets, first-person "accounts"-use Google slides for visuals |
| Nadia | Rats | Slideshow based on the student's essential questions her own video of family pet included |

Since students needed more investigation time and four students had not yet meet with the teacher to discuss their presentation choices, participants agreed to add another meeting in order to complete their work. Students demonstrated excitement over choosing their presentation style and beginning their work by jumping up and down, clapping or talking excitedly with their peers about what they would be developing.

After the last four students met with me and discussed their "A mi manera" scores and what their choice of presentation would be, the work was focused on completing their presentations. Students were using the last week of January 2017 to meet their new goal of finishing at least half of their presentations. Meetings were used to problem-solve within the confines of developing their presentations. For example, Sam asked for help mind-mapping the video game he wished to create. He had decided to use the essential questions he had asked and answered in his research as the basis for his game. He set a goal to come up with the incorrect answers for the questions in his game by the next

meeting. Communication was sent home to his parents to arrange for him to bring his iPad to school in order to complete the video game. Meanwhile, meetings were becoming more social and interactive, with students comparing what they were working on, offering suggestions and commenting on the funny aspects of different projects.

The next week, students checked in with me each day to report the status of their project development. All students at this point were at the halfway point or even farther along. They set the goal of finishing their project by the coming week's end. During each session, students made progress towards their goal of finishing with the help of other participants. Some cooperated by filming and serving as characters in other students' video projects, others acted as audience members while students practiced their presentation skills. Eric and Brad received help from me in their search for appropriate and relevant video to include in their Google Slides presentations.

The beginning of February 2017 found participants perfecting their presentations and ready to create a presentation schedule. Participants decided their first time presenting would be to the independent investigation group, during regular lunch meetings. This gave them the chance to experience and review their peers' work as well as their own before presenting in front of their homeroom classroom. Students showed interest in each project and were encouraged to provide positive as well as constructive feedback to each presenter. By mid month, presentations were finished and participants completed their personal reflection sheets (Appendix G). Students began to arrange times with their homeroom teachers to present their work to their classmates. Meanwhile, I began to conduct exit interviews with groups of three students over a few days during the regular lunchtime meetings in a private hallway space so students would feel more

comfortable in sharing their thoughts. Students were able to reflect together in an open manner on their experience after participating in the group exit interview as they ate lunch together. The last lunch meeting conducted was celebratory in nature, with some students asking if they would have another chance to research and create a new product.

**Themes and patterns**

Initial questionnaires revealed that students felt less positive about two specific areas: the reasoning behind their learning and school work, as well as their attitudes about school and their scores compared to the other areas surveyed. The success of style inventories was mixed, with some students taking to heart the recommendations and thriving while others prefered to stick with the methods of presentation that were more familiar to them. The use of the style inventories and allowing for choice within I.I. projects allowed students to find some meaning in what they were working on and seemed to improve their attitudes regarding why and what they were learning according to data gathered from the exit interviews. Student reflection sheets suggested that the students were highly invested in learning about not only the theme of their work, but also the skills involved in developing their project, such as oral speaking skills, or learning how to use technology.

**Initial questionnaire findings**. After reviewing the results of the initial 32 question student questionnaire, I found students' lowest combined average positive score, or the area students collectively were scoring the least positively, were in the areas of "Work," or reasons behind completing their work and learning. In the area of "Work," 80.9 percent of students responded positively. Within "Perceived Autonomy," or how students feel about school and the amount of power they hold over their results and

attitudes about school, students responded 89.4 percent positively. Student's combined average positive score was higher in the area of "Friends and Family" at 90.9 percent, and higher still in the area of "Teacher Support" at 94.6 percent. It was a trend that I had suspected; students felt that they received support from the important people in their lives, such as parents, teachers and friends, but demonstrated they felt lacking in the control they had over what, why and how they were learning.

**Style inventories and project selection and development.** As outlined in Chapter two, choice can play an enormous role in student engagement. Programs that incorporate student-led learning activities by focusing on students' interests have shown positive correlations with increased student engagement and academic achievement. One example of this was Pendrey's (2015) study that demonstrated a positive correlation between the implementation of Renzulli's schoolwide enrichment model and increased standardized test scores. During the implementation of I.I., there was a general trend for students to score highly the areas of "computer" (designing interactive projects, computer games and multimedia shows) as well as "drama" (acting out a role, story or in a theater) on their style inventories. An interesting three-way split occurred between students who knew exactly what they wanted to do and that coincided with the suggestions of the style inventory, students who had ideas for projects based on previous experiences in contrast to their results on the style inventory, and students who relied mostly on their inventory results and discussions with the teacher to guide them into a decision on a presentation style.

Selection of a presentation style based on a student's style inventories played a key role in student engagement throughout the study. Students often scored high in more

than one style of presentation. It was found that students who combined presentation styles into one project (art, computer and drama together, for example) developed more well-rounded and thoughtful projects. Multiple styles seemed to bring new perspectives to these projects, with students presenting and expanding on more complex ideas. Instead of communicating basic facts they had learned from their research, students found connections to their own lives and other areas they have studied and commented on them. These projects were also better received by their peers, with more positive comments and deeper responses. Students who veered from the suggestions of the survey in order to use styles of presentation that they were comfortable with or were familiar to them demonstrated more difficulty in staying engaged in their product, and their satisfaction with their own projects were lower, according to their independent reflections.

**Independent student reflections.** The responses that participants gave on their independent reflections revealed that students that were concerned with their end product and interested in learning how to improve their presentations and expand their knowledge. The reflections also established the importance of student choice in relation to engagement.

Over half of participants identified that they learned something new in regards to the specific themes of their presentations. For example, Tim commented that he learned "Steve Jobs era adoptado. Mary y Paul Jobs lo adoptaron" (Steve Jobs was adopted. Mary and Paul Jobs adopted him) and Sarah learned "George Lucas tiene diabetes, que filmo Indiana Jones" (George Lucas has diabetes; that he also filmed Indiana Jones). Over half of the participants mentioned how they improved skills related to the project: organization, researching, or an aspect of the type of presentation they choose, such as

how to edit a video. Sam stated that he learned “más de como hacer el videojuego” (more about how to make the videogame). Allison said “Yo aprendí como usar imovie…” (I learned how to use iMovie...).

Most students also identified the problems they remember facing as finding sources and answers to specific questions they had asked. Nadia said, “no tenía mucha información en google pero fui a Británica y había mucha información” (There wasn’t a lot of information in Google, but I went to Britannica and there was a lot of information). Multiple students identified they could improve their products next time by increasing the amount of detail they would include in their presentations and, at times, the amount of effort they would put forth in finding such information. Sarah said she would “Tomar más tiempo buscando información. Porque tenía mucho pero creo que yo podía tener más información.” (Take more time looking for information. Because I had a lot but I think I could have had more information). Nicki said she would, “Buscar en Bunis porque donde yo encontré información no fue cierto.” (Look in Bunis because where I found information wasn’t correct). Bunis is a Spanish search engine for children, which was provided on a list of resources to which students had access (Appendix F). Although student responses differed in their areas of identified learning, all students were able to recognize what they had learned. Student commitment to improving their work and increased engagement throughout the process of independent investigations was also reflected in the group exit interviews.

**Group exit interviews.** Students sat down in groups of two or three with me to complete exit interviews that consisted of ten open-ended questions (Appendix H). The first thing that was evident was that most students enjoyed working on their I.I. projects

more than other work at school. Specifically, 91 percent, or 10/11 of participants responded to the question “Did your work in I.I. interest you less, more, or the same as work in other classes?” with the answer “more,” often accompanied by an enthusiastic nod of the head and smile. The student who did not immediately answer yes to this question expressed that she enjoyed her I.I. work more than her usual class work, and about the same as her work in the gifted program. When asked to elaborate, students explained that they enjoyed the process because they were studying something they liked, it felt fun, and they were proud to accomplish something that was more difficult than normal. For one student, finishing was something he did not initially think was possible, and thus, he expressed feeling proud of himself when he accomplished the task.

In addition, 73 percent or 8/11 of students reported feeling more eager or excited to come to school when they were participating in I.I. in comparison to other school days, citing the opportunity be with their peers, being able to use technology and search for interesting information as reasoning behind their excitement. When the topic of what they would like to do more often at school arose, students asked for more opportunities to complete another round of I.I. projects. In comparison, the areas over half of students signaled as less engaging at school were areas that required students to sit, listen and wait for others to understand, with over a third citing waiting in general, and another 10 percent describing specific classes as less engaging due to the amount of time they perceive as inactive, or waiting.

When asked what could be done to improve the I.I. experience, over half of students expressed that they would like to have more time to complete their projects within the regular school day. This seems to indicate that students would like to spend

more time on I.I, which can be interpreted as evidence of a high level of student engagement. Most students found it difficult to either identify or tell me what I could have done differently, as most responses were rooted in allowing for more time to work and assistance in searching for information. In comparison to the answers from the initial student questionnaire, where students seemed to have lower responses to questions behind their motivations for work, 100 percent of the of students identified by the end of this study that earning good grades at school were important so they could learn something new or have better opportunities for their futures. Perceived parental, teacher and peer support did not seem to be lower than the initial positive scores received. Students demonstrated higher levels of interest and engagement across the different indicators, comparing their levels of engagement during the intervention as similar or higher than their levels of engagement when participating in programs specifically designed for learners who are gifted.

**Concepts from the literature review revisited**

Participants identified specific gifted education strategies mentioned in the literature review such as pull-out programs and acceleration in positive terms, and even equated their engagement during I.I. with some of those experiences. Immersion education was explored in Chapter two and several types of programs were discussed, along with the level of engagement within the structure of independent investigations. Gifted education strategies, immersion education concepts, independent investigations and student engagement components were addressed in the literature review in Chapter two. This section will give a brief overview of each subdomain and the connections encountered within the results of this study.

**Gifted education.** Johnsen (2005) suggested teachers use pre-assessments for more advanced students, stating they should participate in whole-class instruction for new concepts and be provided with independent work on a more complex level. This coincides with what students reported in their exit interviews, or that their least favorite moments of the day were when they needed to sit through lessons designed to teach what they felt they already knew, and waiting for others to catch up or understand. The subject for which the majority of participants were accelerated, math, follows the suggestion of pre-testing in order to avoid student disengagement. In their exit interviews, students used their accelerated math class as an example of when they felt most engaged during the school day.

Their weekly gifted pull-out program was also discussed in the exit interviews as another area in which they feel more engaged, excited and challenged. The district in question is utilizing a multi-faceted program approach. Students have multiple styles of accommodations available to them, such as acceleration and pull-out programs in tandem with cluster grouping as Vaughn, Feldhusen, and Asher (1991) suggested as a possible method to best serve students who are gifted. In their exit interviews, some students equated their level of engagement while working on their I.I. projects as similar to or higher than when they participate in their weekly pull-out program. Students had already rated their interactions and support with family, teachers and friends as high before the intervention on their initial student questionnaires. Students cited time with peers as a positive part of the I.I. experience, validating what McCormick (2012) suggested: providing time with high-ability peers, such as with cluster grouping, is one way to best meet the needs of students who are gifted and encourage them towards deeper

engagement. Independent investigation models, in this study, were rated by students as having similar effects on their interest and engagement as acceleration, pull-out programs and cluster grouping, which are proven models that increase student engagement and are viewed as effective practices. Students who are both gifted and language learners therefore need to have some awareness of themselves as a learner in order to reach higher levels of achievement throughout their years at school. There are many connections between levels of autonomy and choice, engagement and language learners.

**Immersion Education.** Participants were able to stay mostly within the target language during all steps of the process of the intervention, which is significant to these findings since the students involved participate in a total immersion program and not two-way immersion nor partial immersion, which often have a space for second language learners to utilize their first language. Total immersion, as defined by the The Center for Applied Linguistics (2011) is inclusive of: "Programs in which all or almost all subjects taught in the lower grades (K-2) are taught in the foreign language; instruction in English usually increases in the upper grades (3-6) to 20%-50%, depending on the program" (para. 6). This is an important consideration when assessing whether this intervention is effective and appropriate in accordance with the philosophy of the immersion program in which they study. In a total immersion model, students are expected to access information, produce and communicate through the lens of the target language. Since the resources students used allowed them to learn, communicate and produce using the target language almost exclusively, this intervention followed the philosophy of a total immersion model.

The resources provided to students in the target language (Appendix F) were referenced by students in both the exit interviews and the reflection sheets. Students were able to identify situations where specific information was not easily found, but also expressed that they still felt they could have found more information if they had had time to continue using specific Spanish language resources. Since immersion students have less background knowledge and experience regarding resources in the target language, providing students with a list of reliable and appropriate resources in the target language streamlined the process of finding, reading and reviewing the reliability of sources. Due to this, students were exposed to higher-quality, more reliable information within the confines of their needs based on language level and background knowledge. Independent investigations, although more challenging in a second language, can operate within the parameters of a total immersion program when resources in the target language are intentionally provided to students.

Students who are gifted often face a specific set of issues, one being perfectionism, which often stands in direct opposition to the growth mindset that the school in this study encourages. Dweck (2006) described a fixed mindset as successes and failures being seen as brought on by intelligence and not determination or hard work. In a second language setting, a fixed mindset makes it next to impossible to gain experience and mastery, especially when practice and production of the target language with increasing awareness and correction of errors lead to higher proficiency. Students in this study have had instruction in the target language for nearly five years. Although some struggle with perfectionism and the disappointment that comes when they do not meet their expectations, the practice of a growth mindset (the opposite of a fixed mindset)

within the confines of the target language seems to have led students to be more flexible and less anxious when committing errors and receiving corrections by teachers, peers and self monitoring during the implementation of independent investigations. Functioning within the target language did not appear to present any significant barriers to participants, perhaps due to their previous practice in both the target language and viewing learning using a growth mindset. The fact that students have spent a majority of their time at school learning a second language has allowed students to better accept critiques, as seen during the presentation and reflection stages of this study, although tendencies towards perfectionism and fixed mindsets have not disappeared completely.

One conscious decision I made related to growth mindset and perfectionism was to not include a formal rubric or other assessment piece. Students were given qualitative teacher and peer feedback immediately after their presentations. This was to keep the focus on student learning and growth without the distractions or pressures a quantitative grade or score could add to the process. Not using a rubric allowed students to focus on their learning and growth during the completion of their project, however, it also left expectations more open, meaning students might not have been as confident as they could have been in what the expectations of the project was.

One important factor in this whole process was student choice and autonomy. The Reform in Education (1998) Research Assessment Package For Schools (RAPS) was used as a model for questioning students regarding these areas. Renzulli's SEM and the translated tools of Kettle, Renzulli and Rizza's *My Way...An Expression Style Inventory*, a translated Renzulli's (1977) *Interest-A-Lyzer* put great emphasis not only on the importance of student choice and autonomy within their learning but also the

demonstration of actual learning. Results from student questionnaires and interviews coincide with the conclusion that choice and autonomy play large roles in the engagement of immersion students who are gifted. Several connections that can be made across themes, including the importance of choice and autonomy, a growth mindset and student awareness of their own needs and interests, which all come together in the undertaking of independent investigations.

**Independent Investigations.** Juliani (2014) made the connection between Google's "20% Time" and Montessori education, having the freedom to explore something chosen based on individualized interests, such as in independent investigations. Renzulli and Purcell (1995) claimed that a schoolwide enrichment model, a model that includes Type III interventions, known as independent investigations here, results in "greater learning by more motivated students" (p. 14) and cited two factors that attribute to this: greater student engagement throughout the process, and the mutual job of parents and teachers to foster student creativity. Observations of students during the process of independent investigations revealed students becoming visibly more excited about certain aspects of their work within independent investigations. Students reported in their exit interviews higher levels of engagement when they were participating in independent investigations in comparison to their mainstream classroom work, and similar levels of engagement when compared to their accelerated or pull-out gifted program work.

Students also demonstrated higher levels of creativity the more they committed to following the suggestions of Kettle, Renzulli and Rizza's *My Way…An Expression Style Inventory* (Appendix D). Several students began with one or two simple ideas and, as

their project progressed, integrated diverse styles of presentation until they had multi-faceted products. For example, Grace started with the idea of pretending to be a toilet salesman in order to discuss the history of toilets. After investigating several important figures in the development of modern sanitation, she decided instead to role-play them, changing costumes and using visuals on Google slides as well as props (different styles of toilets made from playdough) she had commissioned from a fellow participant. Sarah decided to create a mock interview with George Lucas. At first, she had imagined a simple, straightforward mock interview, with her asking questions and a classmate responding while recording on an iPad. Later, as she began to prepare the interview script, she began to incorporate elements she had seen in other interviews; she took on the role of another celebrity interviewing George Lucas, referenced the sources of her questions as if they were from fans on different social media sites, and added opening and closing credits to an imagined radio station. These extra investments of time and ideas showcases increased levels of student engagement and creativity.

**Student Engagement.** McCormick (2012) found three factors that parents, students and teachers all described as key to elicit student engagement: learning should be interactive, students should be interested in what is being taught, and students should have the opportunity to be creative while learning. The independent investigation model seemed to deliver all three. While participating in independent investigations, students were actively involved in creating their own knowledge, were given the opportunities to choose what they would be learning and the freedom to use their creativity in order to demonstrate their learning.

McCormick (2002) as well as Garfinkel, Allen and Neuharth-Pritchett (1993) cited multiple strategies to increase the engagement of students who are gifted, with one common conclusion; careful planning and implementation are vital. Educators must carefully review the learning outcomes in order to identify areas of student interest, create opportunities for creativity, and specifically plan for affective objectives within academic lessons so that learning can be interactive and allow for student creativity. As earlier mentioned, intentionally providing resources to students, especially in the context of a second language classroom, provides students with a better base from which to investigate and, in this study, allowed students to further develop their ideas and leave them wondering about how they could further improve their work.

**Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the results gathered from the study of the question: *What is the impact of independent investigations on the engagement of students labeled as gifted in the elementary immersion setting?* Participants consisted of eleven fourth-grade students between the ages of nine and ten who were chosen to participate in this study based on their previous identification and placement into the district's gifted program. Student participation in the project spanned four months, where they were able to gauge their interests and communication styles, tailor their learning to a specific topic of their choice and developed new skills in order to utilize their creativity in a way that showcased their learning. Data were collected and analyzed from student questionnaires, a translated Kettle, Renzulli and Rizza's *My Way...An Expression Style Inventory*, a translated Renzulli's (1977) *Interest-A-Lyzer,* individual student reflections and group exit interviews. Findings from student questionnaires were triangulated with comments

from student exit interviews as well as teacher observations in order to provide a better picture of the effect of independent investigations on Spanish immersion students who are gifted. Several themes from the study reflected the conclusions found in the literature review. Major learnings as well as implications, limitations and recommendations for future study will be discussed in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# CONCLUSION

Over the course of my teaching career, I have been drawn to two specific populations of students: immersion language learners, and students who are gifted and talented. In order to better serve students who belong to both groups, I decided to investigate the question: *What is the impact of independent investigations on the engagement of students labeled as gifted in the elementary immersion setting?* After implementing, collecting and analyzing various data sources, I have come away with several findings which I plan to share with others in my school and district. The limitations of this study, however, should be taken into account when reviewing the findings, since each immersion and gifted program is different. I have found that my experiences throughout this project have resulted in my own growth and have led me to new questions about how to better challenge and provide space and time for my students who are gifted to participate in similar enrichment activities.

## Major learnings

Although much of my research into independent investigations led me to believe going through the process with my students could increase their level of excitement and engagement, I could not be sure of exactly how my students would respond. Comparisons from the initial questionnaires and the group exit interviews showed that students appeared to feel more engaged and more excited to come to school when they were participating in independent investigations. Students equated their engagement during the I.I. process as the same or at higher levels than when they participated in gifted programming or acceleration classes.

At the outset of this process, I felt certain that the target language would present challenges in both finding and comprehending information. I was glad to find that in this instance, the intentional gathering and listing of resources in order to provide them to students in a centralized location allowed for a more streamlined process and less uncertainty on the part of students as to how to find the information they needed. It was interesting to see how well the translated *My Way…An Expression Style Inventory* (Appendix D) allowed some students to hone their skills and preferences in order to develop a more engaging and multi-faceted presentation. One key finding was that students who followed the suggestions of the style inventories ultimately demonstrated higher levels of creativity and engagement throughout the independent investigation process.

In addition to the conclusions stated earlier, this process has given me better insight into the world of students who are gifted. Spending lunch several times a week with them allowed me a window into their social and playful sides that some often hesitate to reveal in the general education setting. I was amazed to see the amount of progress most students made with the short time provided to them during meetings along with the work they did on their own time. Although I entered this process imagining that I could expect participants to comprehend more advanced information and concepts than their peers, I was interested to see how some students were not only able to comprehend abstract concepts, but also create and integrate their own complex thoughts and ideas into their products. I also found it helpful that students could be resources for each other. Much of project development hinged on students showing each other how to use a

specific tool or access information and resources, such as how to utilize specific tools on the video game creator.

This process also confirmed for me what I need in order to be a successful teacher and writer. The work I invested at the beginning of this process by translating, reviewing and planning out the steps that students would follow allowed me to have a clear vision of how our work together would progress. I was glad that I had left room to modify the timing of each student's research and project development. Although I am not always able to provide project-based learning experiences for my students in every subject, much of my teaching philosophy is intertwined with this concept of promoting active and experiential learning. I feel more satisfied and confident in my students' learning when I have a clear vision of where I hope for them to arrive, and when I allow for time and modifications on how they should get there. I am not afraid of, and even love to be surprised by, students who use their creativity and take their learning or presentations in new directions. I also realized that although I am not a meticulous note-taker, I relied heavily on the written documentation of different aspects of my work. Lists of students ideas, check-ins regarding their progress and the meeting notes I took allowed me to see patterns and overarching themes in a broader sense than I would have without them. Similarly, much of what I learned stemmed from my time studying the literature surrounding my research.

**Revisiting the Literature Review**

I found the information about Renzulli's SEM, gifted program models as well as questions from three subdomains within RAPS and Learning-Gardens Educational

Assessment Group's (2008) student survey particularly important to my work on this capstone.

Olenchak and Renzulli (1989) found that schools that have adopted the SEM enjoyed more favorable attitudes towards education by both students and teachers. Pendrey (2015) conducted three-year study, with the Renzulli schoolwide enrichment model as an independent variable, in order to determine if the model would correlate with higher standardized test scores for elementary students. The findings were positive, and Pendrey (2015) highlighted the importance of teacher buy-in to an enrichment model. Reading about how others have implemented similar programs allowed me to visualize how I could organize and implement a version of it in a gifted Spanish immersion setting. I am in agreement with Pendrey (2015) that teacher buy-in is of high importance to the success of an enrichment model. Students demonstrated their increased interest and engagement while participating in independent investigations in both formal surveys and informal in class observations. Without the support from my team as students' homeroom teachers, there would have been more cases of missed opportunities for students to meet, no time for them to devote to their projects in-class and most likely less excitement on the part of students to participate.

Another particularly important portion of the literature review was the time spent reviewing several student engagement surveys, including the RAPS and Learning-Gardens Educational Assessment Group's (2008) student survey. I had the chance to review and use a simple student engagement survey through my school district in years past, but I knew that I would be needing more in-depth information and data regarding specific areas of student engagement. I found the organization of both surveys helpful in

that they gave me a guide as to how to think about not only the questions I wanted to ask, but also the way in which I would categorize them into subdomains and eventually analyze the data gathered from it. These surveys also made me consider subdomains that I had not before. Although I knew I should investigate student's perspectives of school, I had not considered including gauging their feelings about parents and peers. I drew several questions from both surveys and modified them to fit the needs of this study.

McCormick (2002), as well as Garfinkel, Allen and Neuharth-Pritchett (1993) highlighted different strategies to increase the engagement of students who are gifted, with one common factor: careful planning and implementation. In order for learning to be interactive, allow creativity, and include affective objectives, educators must review units and outcomes in order to identify areas of student interest, create opportunities for creativity and specifically plan for affective objectives within academic lessons. I had believed in the power of planning from the beginning, and had took to heart the research that supported it. I spent many hours translating, investigating, reading and thinking about the implementation of the independent investigation process, and I found what McCormick (2002) and Garfinkel, Allen and Neuharth-Pritchett (1993) claimed to be true. Much of what I consider the successes of this study hinged on careful planning, and the areas that need improvement, such as the timing of meetings, could also be solved with better planning.

Originally, I had assumed that since my students participated in a Spanish immersion program, there would be major differences in how I could implement independent investigations into my classroom. I was able to mitigate some of the effects I predicted by doing my own investigating and creating a list of Spanish language

resources for students to access. I believe this only better reinforces the point McCormick (2002) along with Garfinkel, Allen and Neuharth-Pritchett (1993) made regarding the need for careful planning. As earlier stated, McGraw-Hill Education and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt are some of the companies that have translated curriculum available; however, these often provide content within grade-level expectations and do not often include extension opportunities for students who are gifted.

As my research progressed, I noticed strong connections between second language development and a growth mindset. Students in an immersion setting often lack the vocabulary or grammar sense to speak accurately in the target language, resulting in consistent errors and corrections, and eventually an understanding that learning a language is a process in which no one is perfect at overnight. Students who are gifted often strive for perfection and can struggle with the idea that they should practice or work at getting better. I believe that students who are gifted and participate in immersion tend to have more of a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006) because of their experience learning the target language, and could transfer that mindset to new areas of their learning, such as when they are working on independent investigations. The implementation of independent investigations allowed students to access a wide breadth of information. Students were able to not only increase their knowledge on a given topic, but also claimed to improve skills related to creating their final products, such as how to conduct a search, oral presentational skills, or how to better utilize technology. Experiences with curriculum are closely tied to decisions by districts and states, which is one of the limitations of this study that should be kept in mind.

**Implications and Limitations**

The nature of independent investigations allows for students to transfer their learnings to different contexts outside of the classroom. The content knowledge they gain may be applied to new learnings in a broad range of subjects. Skills students acquire while preparing their projects are also transferrable, since how to conduct research or create a movie could be useful in multiple settings. Independent investigations allows students to take greater ownership for their learning, something most students surveyed found to be lacking in their school experience.

Within my research, I found several limitations. The smaller size of the study and the setting may have skewed the results. The students in this study have multiple supports in place to improve their growth and learning at school as well as a large amount of time and vested interest in their learning from home, which may have given them more opportunities and support that could have affected their responses. The student's relationship to me as their teacher could have caused them to hesitate to comment on or downplay the negative aspects or opinions they had regarding independent investigations, stemming from a wish to not hurt my feelings. The resources I used in this study in the target language of Spanish may be useful for immersion teachers of Spanish, but they may not be of assistance to other immersion language teachers who teach in other languages.

Although this research project found benefits within the independent investigations model, it should not be viewed as a stand-alone model for teaching students who are gifted. Gifted resource teachers, programs and other supports should always be a part of curriculum for students who are gifted. It is my hope that my work

could be used in increasing the amount and quality of enrichment opportunities provided to students who are gifted within a Spanish immersion setting.

**Communicating the results**

Since multiple Spanish immersion teachers from each grade level are designated as cluster teachers, I imagine that my findings and process could be helpful to this specific group of teachers within my district and perhaps useful to immersion teachers in other settings. My hope is to be able to run a small professional development group during one of the district's designated early release/late start workshops during the upcoming 2017-2018 academic year. I would like to be able to help other teachers in my district to implement versions of independent investigations in their own classrooms to serve their immersion students who are gifted populations. I would present my findings as well as the tools I developed, review the different options for scheduling and implementation as well as answer questions. If possible, I would like to see how other teachers may implement independent investigations in their classrooms and offer feedback. I have found that teacher buy-in is extremely important, expressed in both the research I read as well as in the setting of this project. Teachers that are better equipped and informed might feel more confident when implementing this intervention, which, in turn, will create a positive cycle of student and teacher interest.

I have also been in contact with my district's Director of Advanced Learning, who has encouraged me to make the resources I have translated and used available to other teachers in the district through our online sharing portal. My hope is that other immersion cluster teachers will be able to use not only my results, but also the translated materials and resources for their own classrooms. As more educators are able to implement

programs and curriculum that better address the needs of immersion students who are gifted, more will be understood about what is best practice and policies that support learners with these intersecting backgrounds. Callahan, Moon and Oh (2013) reported that approximately 70 percent of districts surveyed rely on state funding, local funding, or a combination of both to run gifted services and around 18 percent received no funding at all. The NAGC cited the lack of federal government guidance and funding for gifted services as the cause for the varying range of services available to students who are gifted from state to state. When more advocates are available for this group of students, the understanding of the importance of providing these programs should increase in addition to funding, not only at the classroom level, but statewide and nationally as well.

**Recommendations**

My research question focused on the impact of independent investigations on the engagement of immersion students who are gifted. The next area of research I would recommend would be taking deeper look at how to bring more challenges into the process of independent investigations. Since some students decided not to try a new form of presentation even though their style inventories indicated it would be more enjoyable for them, ways to encourage students who are reluctant to step outside of their comfort zone to pursue new forms of products should be further investigated. Timing how and when students would participate in their I.I. projects was difficult to arrange, and required that I spend most of the time on the project during non-contact time, such as lunch. I would recommend that teachers carefully review their schedules and allow for student work time and meetings with teachers that do not interfere with areas in which students already show high engagement. The most effective use of time would be to seek out areas in the

curriculum where students have partial or full mastery of the concepts being presented and allow students to use the I.I. model to investigate to either deeper their understanding or broaden their knowledge on a related topic.

I would also recommend researching how the independent investigations format may be used to modify or augment curricula already in place within cluster classrooms. Immersion students who are gifted in the school district in question participate in nearly all mainstream curriculum, which is fairly uniform between both English and Spanish programs. Finding ways in which all or portions of independent investigations could be modified to allow students who are gifted the opportunity to investigate or demonstrate their learning in this way could change student engagement throughout the day.

Thinking ahead, there are several areas in which the work I have completed could be improved upon. Students who are gifted generally need less repetitions than mainstream students in order to retain information or understand a concept. Teachers may take advantage of this and have students "test out," or take a pretest to ensure they have mastery of concepts or objectives, in order to allow students more class time to complete independent investigation projects.

Another area to expand within independent investigations is outside or community involvement. "Experts" in a student's chosen area of investigation could be invited in to either provide knowledge and resources, or, could be utilized in a way that improves student understanding and use of skills related to independent investigations, such as the use of a technology, tool, or research resource. These modifications would have a positive impact on all students who are gifted, however, the benefits from these

changes would serve students who have been identified as highly gifted would be at an increased rate.

**Connections to Hamline's School of Education Conceptual Framework**

Hamline School of Education uses its Conceptual Framework in order to develop educators who promote equity, build community, construct knowledge and practice thoughtful inquiry and instruction. Immersion students who are gifted make up a smaller population of students with specific needs. This capstone promoted equity by looking into ways in which these students' needs, which can be easily overlooked could, be better met. The way in which this investigation participants worked together with teachers and family encouraged the building of communities of teachers and learners. Students also constructed their own knowledge not only on their selected topic, but about themselves as learners. By building from what they already know, students were able to gain new knowledge based on their interests. Student reflections in this study lead their teachers to do the same, which started a cycle of learning, reflection and growth.

**Conclusion**

I began this capstone to investigate the question: *What is the impact of independent investigations on the engagement of students labeled as gifted in the elementary immersion setting?* After gathering resources, translating tools, reviewing the literature and methodologies, I began implementing, collecting, and analyzing data regarding student engagement before, during, and after I.I. projects. I have come away with several encouraging findings, including positive outcomes in the areas of student perceived autonomy and overall engagement while participating in independent investigations. These findings will be shared with others in my school and district in the

hopes of increasing teacher awareness and ability to meet the needs of immersion students who are gifted. I would like to share with my colleagues the positive impact independent investigations had on my immersion students who are gifted, their excitement regarding the autonomy they were given when selecting topics and styles of presentations, the way Kettle, Renzulli and Rizza's *My Way...An Expression Style Inventory* guided students to presentation styles and allowed them to show their creativity in developing and melding different presentational methods.

The limitations of this study, however, should be taken into account when reviewing the findings, including program size, support and style. I am grateful for the experiences I had throughout this project, which have resulted in my own growth as well as lead me to new questions about how to better challenge and provide space and time for my students who are gifted to participate in similar activities. I hope to continue to search for ways to improve student engagement and access to opportunities for my immersion students who are gifted.

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# Appendix A

## Parent/Guardian Permission

November 4, 2016

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am your child's teacher and also a graduate student working on my master's degree in education at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota. As part of my graduate work, I plan to conduct research in my classroom to study the impact of independent investigations on the engagement of High Potential students from November 2016 to February 2017. The purpose of this letter is to ask your permission for your child to take part in my research.

Your child has been selected to participate because of their identification and admission into the High Potential program. I would like to study the impact of independent investigations on High Potential student engagement. Student engagement is the level of attention and interest students show when they are learning. I plan to have students go through the independent investigation process November 2016 through February 2017. During this process, students are to explore their interests through surveys and review different options for their final project. Students will participate in an initial engagement questionnaire. When students have identified a topic to investigate, they will be guided to books, articles, websites and other media in Spanish in order to conduct their research. After compiling the necessary information, students will create a final product and present it to the class. During the research and product creation stages, students will participate in group interviews to gain their perspectives and levels of engagement. At the end of the process students will fill out a reflection sheet. All steps will be conducted in Spanish.

There is little to no risk for your child to participate. All results will be confidential and anonymous. I will not record information about individual students, such as their names, nor report identifying information or characteristics in the report. Participation is voluntary and you may decide at any time and without negative consequences that information about your child will not be included in the research. Students who choose to not participate will not be penalized in any way. Possible benefits of participation include allowing for student creativity and choice as well as students progressing and producing work at their own level and pace.

I have received approval for my study from the School of Education at Hamline University and from the XXXXXXXXX School District. The capstone (research) will be cataloged in Hamline's Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository. My results might also be included in an article for publication, in a professional journal, or in a report at a professional conference. In all cases, your child's identity and participation in this study will be kept confidential.

If you agree that your child may participate, keep this page. Fill out the agreement to participate on the next page and return it to me no later than November 18, 2016.

If you have any questions, please email or call me at school.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Suarez

Informed Consent to Participate in Independent Investigations

*Return this portion to Carolyn Suarez by November ___, 2016.*

I have received your letter about the study you plan to conduct in which you will be investigating student engagement. I understand there is little to no risk involved for my child, that his/her confidentiality will be protected, and that I may withdraw or my child may withdraw from the project at any time.

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

Appendix B

Student Questionnaire

# Cuestionario para Estudiantes

Fecha_____

Marca la caja que mejor corresponde a tu respuesta de cada pregunta.

| | **Pregunta** | **Muy cierto** | **Un poco cierto** | **No muy cierto** | **No es cierto** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Hago mi tarea porque a mi me gusta hacerla. | | | | |
| 2 | Mi maestra me trata justamente. | | | | |
| 3 | Hago mis trabajos en clase porque son interesantes. | | | | |
| 4 | Hago mi tarea porque quiero entender más acerca del tema. | | | | |
| 5 | Lo que mi maestra espera de mi no es lo que puedo hacer. | | | | |
| 6 | Puedo ser exitoso(a) en la escuela, si quiero. | | | | |
| 7 | Hago mis trabajos en clase porque pienso que son importantes. | | | | |
| 8 | Mi maestra no explica por qué hay que aprender ciertas cosas en la escuela. | | | | |
| 9 | No parece que la maestra tiene suficiente tiempo para mi. | | | | |
| 10 | Hago mis trabajos en la clase porque quiero aprender nuevas cosas. | | | | |
| 11 | Hago mi tarea porque es divertida. | | | | |
| 12 | A mi maestra le importa mis resultados en la escuela. | | | | |
| 13 | Hago mi tarea porque quiero aprender nuevas cosas. | | | | |
| 14 | Mi maestra no habla acerca de cómo el trabajo de la escuela está relacionado con lo que quiero llegar a ser. | | | | |
| 15 | Cuando estoy con mis padres me siento bien. | | | | |
| 16 | Mi maestra no me trata justamente. | | | | |
| 17 | Mi maestra me interrumpe cuando tengo algo que decir. | | | | |
| 18 | Hago mis trabajos en la clase porque sacar buenas notas es importante para mi. | | | | |
| 19 | Cuando estoy con mis compañeros me siento bien. | | | | |
| 20 | A mi maestra les gusta mejor a mis compañeros que a mi. | | | | |
| 21 | Hago mis trabajos en la clase porque es divertido. | | | | |
| 22 | Mi maestra no me explica bien lo que espera de mi. | | | | |
| 23 | Me siento orgulloso(a) de mi mismo(a). | | | | |
| 24 | A mis padres les gusta hablar conmigo acerca de la escuela. | | | | |
| 25 | Mi maestra intenta controlar todo lo que hago. | | | | |
| 26 | Me esfuerzo para salir bien en la escuela. | | | | |
| 27 | Me siento bien cuando estoy con mi maestra. | | | | |
| 28 | Tengo ganas de ir a la escuela. | | | | |
| 29 | A veces siento que no debo estar en esta escuela. | | | | |
| 30 | Me siento aburrido cuando trabajamos en clase. | | | | |
| 31 | Esta escuela es un buen lugar para estudiantes como yo. | | | | |
| 32 | Si algo malo me pasa en la escuela, lo puedo superar. | | | | |

Appendix C

Interest-A-Lyzer

# El Interes-A- Lyzer

Por
Joseph S. Renzulli
Universidad de Connecticut

Nombre _____ Edad_____

Escuela _____ Grado_____ Fecha_____

El propósito de este cuestionario es para ayudar a ti a llegar a ser más familiar con algunos de tus intereses e intereses potenciales. El cuestionario no es una prueba y no hay respuestas correctas ni equivocadas. Tus respuestas serán completamente confidenciales. Tu podrías querer conversar con tu profesora u otros alumnos, pero esta decisión es completamente tuyo(a).

Algo de tiempo que tu pases en actividades de enriquecimiento serán dedicado a trabajar individualmente o grupos pequeños de proyectos. Nos gustaría que trabajes en proyectos que son de interés tuyo. Es necesario para ti hacer un poco de razonamiento para saber que algunos intereses tuyos podrían ser.

La mejor manera para identificar tus intereses es pensar sobre las cosas que te gusta hacer ahora y también algunas cosas que te podría gustar hacer si dado la oportunidad. Algunas de las preguntas que siguen serán "imagina si…" preguntas, pero mantén en mente que el único propósito es tener que pensar acerca de las decisiones que tu harías en una situación imaginaria.

Cuando leas las preguntas intenta no pensar sobre los tipos de respuestas que tus amigos podrían escribir o como ellos podrían sentirse sobre tus respuestas. Recuerda, nadie verá tus respuestas si tú quieres mantenerlo confidencial.

No intentes responder las preguntas ahorita. Léelo una y otra vez y piénsalo por un rato y luego escribe tus respuestas. Por favor no converses del cuestionario con otros a esa hora. Algunas veces nosotros podemos influenciar por la opinión de otros y esta influencia puede prevenirse desde explorando algunos de tus propios intereses. Recuerda el propósito del Interés-A-Lyzer es pensar por sí mismo en tus propios intereses.

1. Imagina que tu clase ha decidido crear su propia compañía de producción de video. Cada persona ha sido preguntado para registrarse para su primer, segundo o tercera opción para unos de los trabajos en lista debajo. Marca tu primera opción con un 1, segundo opción con un 2, y 3 opción con un 3.

_____ Actor/Actriz ___ Diseñador de ropa

_____ Director ___ Diseñador de escenario

_____Músico ____Gerente de negocios

____ Persona de luz y audio _____ Guionista

_____ Especialista de efectos en computadora

_____ Persona de apoyo _____ Agente de anuncios

____operador de cameras ____ Bailarín

2. Imagina que tú has llegado ser un famoso autor de un libro reconocido. ¿Cuál es el tema principal del libro? Marca con un círculo.

Artes bellas Negocios Ciencia

Escritor Historia Acción social

Atleta Matemáticas Artes Escénicas

tecnología

¿De qué se tratará?

¿Cuál sería un buen título para tu libro?

3. Tecnologías de computadoras y teléfonos nos permiten comunicarnos con personas de todo el mundo. Imagina que tu escuela ha instalado un sistema de internet o teléfono que te permitirá comunicarte con cualquiera en el mundo. ¿Con quién tú te comunicarías?

Primera opción _____

Segundo opción _____

Tercera opción _____

4. Imagina que una máquina del tiempo ha sido inventado que permitirá que gente famosa del pasado viajen atraves del tiempo. Si tú pudieras invitar a algunas de estas personas a visitar tu clase, ¿A quien tu invitarías?

Primera opción _____

Segunda opción _____

Tercera opción _____

5. ¿Eres tú un coleccionista? ¿Coleccionas tú estampas, monedas, autógrafos, tarjeta de béisbol u otras cosas? Haz una lista las cosas que coleccionas y el número de años que has estado coleccionando.

| Cosas que colecciono | Número de años que he estado coleccionando |
| --- | --- |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

Imagina que tú tienes el tiempo y el dinero para coleccionar cualquier cosa. ¿Qué quieres coleccionar?

6. Imagina que tú tienes la oportunidad de viajar a una nueva y emocionante ciudad. Tú puedes elegir 3 lugares para visitar. Marca tu primera, segunda, tercera opción solo colocando 1,2 y 3 en los espacios debajo.

___ Galería de Arte

___ Entrenador profesional de deporte

___ Sitios históricos

___ Bolsa de valores

___ Studio de televisión

___ Planetario

___ Centro de telecomunicaciones

___ Orquesta sinfónica

___ Grabación Multidimensional

___ Centro de ciencia

___ Ballet o danza moderna

___ Concierto Musical

___ Reunión de senado estatal

___ Centro de computadoras

___ Sala tribunal

___ Zoológico

___ Obra de teatro

___ Oficina de periódicos

7. Imagina que tú has sido asignado a una estación espacial para tu siguiente año escolar. Tu estas permitido a tomar algunas cosas personales (libros, juegos, pasatiempos) contigo para ayudar y pasar tiempo tiempo libre. Enumera las cosas que llevarías.

_____

_____

_____

8. Imagina que tú puedes pasar una semana “observador de empleos” cualquier persona en tu comunidad para investigar una carrera que te podría

gustar y tener en el futuro. Enumera las ocupaciones de las personas que seleccionarías.

Primera opción _____

Segunda opción _____

Tercera opción _____

9. Los periódicos muchas veces tienen columnas especiales o secciones especiales, por ejemplo los que hay abajo. Imagina que te hayan dado un trabajo como escritor de columna especial en un periódico. ¿Cuáles de los siguientes columnas te gustaría escribir? Marca tu primera, segunda, tercera opción solo colocando 1,2 y 3 en los espacios debajo.

| | |
|---|---|
| ___ crítico de película | ___moda |
| ___ crítico de libro | ___ hechos científicos |
| ___ caricaturas de la política | ___crucigramas |
| ___historiador local | ___ campamento |
| ___ analista de bolsa de valores | ___crítico de música |
| ___ da consejos personales | ___tendencia de negocio |
| ___ crítico de videojuegos | ___humor |

___editorial

___ rompecabezas de matemáticas

___gente famosa

___ da consejos de ajedrez

___ carros y bicicletas

___analista de deporte

___ viajes

___ cuidador de mascotas

___ conexión de internet

___ columnista de computadoras

___ noticias de acción social

___ da consejos para el consumidor

10. Algunas escuelas ofrecen actividades extraescolares que coinciden con los intereses de los estudiantes. De hecho, algunas veces los estudiantes no saben que ellos tienen un interés en algo hasta que ellos lo intentan en un club o actividad. Grupos de enriquecimiento son otro buen lugar para encontrar áreas de interés. Enumera debajo algunos ejemplos de actividades, clubes y grupos. Marca en los que hayas participado con un x. Marca con un círculo a los que te gustaría intentar.

___periódico

___club de literatura

___anuario

___ club de coleccionistas

___Scouts-niños

___club ecológico

___Scouts-niñas

___drama

___ club de cocina

___ club de invenciones

___ club de matemáticas ___ club de ciencias

___ ajedrez ___revista literaria

___ club de niñeros/as ___ club de computadoras

___olimpiada de matemáticas ___deportes (haz una lista)

_____

_____

_____

Nos hemos olvidado de algo? Usa el espacio debajo para crear una lista de actividades en que hayas participado.

Appendix D

My Way...An Expression Style Inventory

# A Mi Manera

Una expresión al estilo inventario

K.E Kettle, J.S. Renzulli, M.G. Rizza
Universidad de Connecticut

Productos proveen a estudiantes y profesionales una manera de expresar que ellos tienen que aprender en una audiencia. Este cuestionario ayudará a determinar los tipos de productos **Tú** estás **interesado** en crear.

Mi nombre es:

---_____

## Instrucciones

Lee cada declaración y haz un circulo alrededor del número que muestra que extensión **Tu** estas **interesado** en crear ese tipo de producto. (No te preocupes si tú no estás seguro como hacer el producto.)

1. Nada Interesado 2. Poco Interesado 3. Moderadamente Interesado
4. Interesado 5. Muy Interesado

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ejemplo: Escribiendo letra de canciones | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1. Escribiendo canciones | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Hablando que yo he aprendido | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Pintando un cuadro | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Diseñando un proyecto sobre software para computadoras | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Filmando y editando un video | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Creando una compañía | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Ayudando en la comunidad | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Actuando en un rol | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Construir un invento | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Tocar un instrumento | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Escribir para un periódico | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Debatir ideas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. Dibujar dibujos para un libro | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Diseñar un proyecto interactivo de computadoras | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Filmar y editar un programa de televisión | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Operar un negocio | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Trabajar para ayudar a otros | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Actuando en un evento | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Construir un proyecto | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Tocando en una banda | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Escribir para una revista | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. Hablar sobre mi proyecto | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. Hacer una escultura de arcilla de un personaje | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. Diseñando información para el internet/computadora | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. Filmar y editar una película | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. Publicidad para un producto | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. Ayudar a otros y soportar una causa social | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. Actúa para una historia | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. Reparar una máquina | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. Componer música | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. Escribir un ensayo | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. Hablar sobre mi investigación | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. Pintando un mural | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. Diseñar un juego de computadora | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. Grabar y editar un programa de radio | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. Publicidad para una idea | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. Ayudar a otros para recaudación de fondos | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. Hacer una obra de teatro | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. Construir un modelo de trabajo | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 40. Hacer música | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 41. Escribir un diario | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 42. Hablar acerca de mis experiencias | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 43. Hacer una escultura de arcilla de una escena | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 44. Diseñar un multimedia show para computadoras | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 45. Seleccionar diapositiva, música para un show de diapositiva | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 46. Administrar inversiones | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 47. Coleccionar ropa o comida para otros | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 48. Interpretar a un personaje | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 49. Armar un botiquín | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 50. Tocar en una orquesta | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**A mi manera… Un Perfil**

Instrucciones: Escribe tu puntaje al lado de cada número. Agrega cada fila a determinar un perfil de tu manera de expresarte.

**Productos**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Escrito | 1.___ | 11.___ | 21.___ | 31.___ | 41.___ |
| Oral | 2.___ | 12.___ | 22.___ | 32.___ | 42.___ |
| Artístico | 3.___ | 13.___ | 23.___ | 33.___ | 43.___ |
| Computadora | 4.___ | 14.___ | 24.___ | 34.___ | 44.___ |
| Audio/Visual | 5.___ | 15.___ | 25.___ | 35.___ | 45.___ |
| Comercial | 6.___ | 16.___ | 26.___ | 36.___ | 46.___ |
| Servicio | 7.___ | 17.___ | 27.___ | 37.___ | 47.___ |
| Dramatización | 8.___ | 18.___ | 28.___ | 38.___ | 48.___ |
| Manipulativo | 9.___ | 19.___ | 29.___ | 39.___ | 49.___ |
| Musical | 10.___ | 20.___ | 30.___ | 40.___ | 50.___ |

Appendix E

Independent Investigation Guidance Packet

# Investigación independiente

## Encontrando una idea

Nombre: _____ Fecha: _____

¿Qué quiero aprender? ¿Qué quiero escribir? ¿Qué quiero crear? ¿Qué quiero enseñar? ¿Qué quiero presentar?

1._____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

# Investigación independiente

## Preguntarse-Encontrando ideas

Nombre:_____ Fecha:_____

El tema para mi investigación independiente es_____

Me pregunto quién_____

Me pregunto qué_____

Me pregunto cuándo_____

Me pregunto dónde_____

Me pregunto cómo_____

## Otras preguntas para guiarte:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

Recuerda: si puedes contestar tu pregunta con una búsqueda rápida de Google, debes investigar más y ser más específico con tus preguntas.

# Contrato de la investigación independiente

Nombre: _____ Fecha: _____

Mi tema es:

_____

Yo elegí este tema porque:

_____

_____

_____

Mi promesa

Yo prometo hacer mi mejor trabajo.

Yo prometo investigar y escribir lo mejor que puedo.

Yo prometo entregar trabajo que es mío.

Yo prometo crear una presentación de la que puedo estar orgulloso.

Yo prometo pedir ayuda si la necesito.

Yo prometo tomar responsabilidad para mi éxito y mis errores.

Yo prometo usar el tiempo que tengo durante la clase para completar mi proyecto.

Firma del estudiante: _____ Fecha: _____

Firma de la maestra: _____ Fecha: _____

Firma de los padres: _____ Fecha: _____

# Escoger a una idea

Nombre: _____ Fecha: _____

1. Piensa en tu tema. ¿Es realístico? ¿Se puede hacerlo? Habla con unos compañeros. ¿Qué opinan ellos?

_____

_____

2. Encierra en un círculo la categoría de tu proyecto.

Aprender de… Aprender hacer….

Aprender crear…

Aprender a probar… Aprender a cambiar…

3. ¿Cuáles materiales necesitarás?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. ¿Cuánto tiempo piensas que necesitas para completar el proyecto?

Una semana Dos semanas Tres o semanas o más

5. ¿Necesitarás la ayuda de un adulto para completar tu investigación independiente? Sí No

Si piensas que sí, ¿con qué piensas que necesitarás ayuda?

_____

_____

_____

Appendix F

Selected Spanish Language Websites

## Distrito SSO:

Britannica en español

BrainPop en español

Destiny (biblioteca de la escuela)

## Otros sitios:

Bunis.org

www.elmundodelosniños.org

Icarito.cl

Vikidia.org

Appendix G

Student Reflection Sheet

## Reflexionar en mi investigación independiente

Nombre: _____ Fecha: _____

Tema y proyecto:

_____

Pasé Aproximadamente _____ días trabajando en el proyecto.

Lo que aprendí mientras trabajé en este proyecto. (Deben ser cosas que aprendiste sobre la investigación, la escritura y la presentación.)

Los problemas que encontré mientras trabajé en este proyecto y así los resolví:

Lo que yo haría diferente la próxima vez y porque:

Appendix H

Student Exit Interview Questions

Preguntas-Entrevistas grupales

Nombres de estudiantes

_____

_____

**¿Qué es lo que les fue bien durante I.I.?**

**¿Qué puedo hacer yo, como maestra, para mejorar la experiencia?**

**¿Te interesaba hacer el trabajo de I.I. menos, más o igual que el trabajo de otras clases?**

**Durante I.I. ¿tenían más ganas de venir a la escuela?**

**¿Qué es lo que te parece lo más aburrido de la escuela/la clase?**

**¿Qué es lo que te parece lo más interesante de la escuela/la clase?**

**¿Qué es lo que te gustaría hacer más enseguida en la escuela/la clase?**

**¿Por qué crees que debes sacar buenas notas en la escuela? ¿Dónde sacas tus opiniones de la escuela?**

**¿Algo más?**

# Appendix I

## School District Research Approval

[redacted] [redacted]

10/8/2016

Dear Carolyn Suarez,

Thank you for submitting your action research project titled "What is the impact of independent investigations on the engagement of gifted immersion elementary students?" After reviewing the application, the Assessment Department is pleased to inform you that your proposal has been accepted.

We look forward to learning about the results of your research and wish you and your students the best during this project. Please contact me if you have any questions [redacted]22 or matt.rega[redacted]12.mn.us.

Sincerely,

Matt Rega
Director of Assessment

# Appendix J

## Hamline Human Subject Review Approval

To: Carolyn Suarez
From: Vivian Johnson
Date: 10-31-16
Re: HSC Approval

On behalf of the Human Subjects Committee, we are pleased to inform you that your application has been fully approved and that you are now able to collect data related to your capstone.

Please accept our best wishes for the successful completion of your project.

Vivian Johnson, PhD
Chair, HSC Committee
School of Education
Hamline University
vjohnson@hamline.edu
(651) 523-2432

Appendix K

Student Consent Form

**Student Consent (read to each student and have her/him put her name at the bottom)**

Sra. Suarez me ha explicado su investigación. Entiendo que si decido participar, Sra. Suarez no usaría mi nombre ni otra información acerca de mí dentro de su investigación. Entiendo que puedo negar participar en la investigación en cualquier momento.
Si no quiero participar, no llenaré este formulario.

Le doy mi permiso a la Sra. Suarez para investigar mi trabajo y entrevistarme.

_____ _____

Student's Name Date

Appendix L

Example Note Card